

# HIGHVALE PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Volunteer and Contractor Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Child Safety Induction Handbook



Prepared by	Carly Epskamp & Kelly Soccio
Date Prepared	24/3/25
Review Date	24/3/26



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this booklet, please contact the School Office.

## **Table of Contents**

Page

Introduction	3
Volunteers Policy	4
Visitors Policy	8
Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy	11
Required Conduct & Behaviour	12
Access Arrangements	12
Access	12
Traffic Management	12
Site Specific Hazards	12
Asbestos	12
Hazardous Substances & Dangerous Goods	13
Animals/Wildlife	13
Emergency Management	13
Emergency Procedures	13
Leaving Site in an Emergency	13
Evacuation Point	13
Emergency & School Contacts	13
Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy	14
Child Safety Code of Conduct	21
Child Safety Responding & Reporting Obligations & Procedures	23
Four Critical Actions for Schools	31
Emergency Evacuation Map	32

## **Introduction**

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at our school. The purpose of this induction pack is to ensure Highvale Primary School volunteers are familiar with our policies and procedures relating to OH&S and child safety, and understand the important role they play in maintaining and promoting the safety of our students.

Volunteers must read the suite of policies and procedures in the links below before commencing any work where children are likely to be present.

To comply with the requirements of the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act 2004 and the Victorian OHS Regulations 2017 the Department of Education and Training (the Department) has implemented an OHS Management System (OHSMS) in all Victorian Government schools.

The OHSMS requires all volunteers to:

- report to the general office or designated site contact upon arrival at site
- complete an OHS induction using the Volunteer OHS Induction Checklist
- sign in/out and ensure their visitors pass is worn at all times whilst on Department or other premises
- have a current Working with Children Check, where applicable.

### **Key messages**

- Highvale Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. We want children attending our school to be safe, happy and respected.
- We are committed to creating an inclusive environment where diversity is supported, and students feel safe to bring their whole selves to school.
- Allegations and concerns relating to the safety and wellbeing of our school community will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.
- We are committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- Everyone has a role to ensure children are safe – if something doesn't feel right, speak up. If you have any concerns about any inappropriate behaviours in the school community you should speak to the Principal or Assistant Principal. If this would not be appropriate in the circumstances, you can contact the North East Regional Office of the Department of Education and Training on 8392 9333.

### **Induction materials – must read**

This induction pack contains the following documents that all new volunteers must read and familiarise themselves with:

- Highvale Primary School Volunteers Policy
- Highvale Primary School Visitors Policy
- Highvale Primary School Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy
- Highvale Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Highvale Primary School Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations and Procedures
- Four Critical Actions for Schools – Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse

# Volunteers Policy

## PURPOSE

To outline the processes that Highvale Primary School will follow to recruit, screen, supervise and manage volunteers to provide a child safe environment, and to explain the legal rights of volunteers.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to the recruitment, screening, supervision and management of all people who volunteer at our school.

## DEFINITIONS

*Child-connected work:* work authorised by the school governing authority/provider of a school boarding services and performed by an adult in a school or school boarding premises environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

*Child-related work:* As defined by the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic), child-related work is work that usually involves direct contact (including in person, over the phone, written and online communication) with a child that is a central part of that person's duties. It does not include work that involves occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to the work.

*Closely related family member:* parent, carer, parent/carer's spouse or domestic partner, stepparent, parent/carer's mother or father in-law, grandparent, uncle or aunt, brother or sister, including step or half siblings.

*Volunteer worker:* A volunteer school worker is a person who voluntarily engages in school work or approved community work without payment or reward.

*School work:* School work means:

- Carrying out the functions of a school council
- Any activity carried out for the welfare of a school, by the school council, any parents' club or association or any other body organised to promote the welfare of the school
- Any activity carried out for the welfare of the school at the request of the principal or school council
- Providing assistance in the work of any school or kindergarten
- Attending meetings in relation to government schools convened by any organisation which receives government financial support

This is a broad definition and means that volunteers who participate in school community activities, such as fundraising and assisting with excursions, are legally protected (ie indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

## POLICY

Highvale Primary School is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. Highvale Primary School also recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our school community and the work that we do.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that Highvale Primary School's volunteers are suitable to work with children and are well-placed to make a positive contribution to our school community.

## Becoming a volunteer

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to:

- approach their child's classroom teacher
- respond to volunteer requests through Compass
- visit the school office for more information on volunteering

## Suitability checks including Working with Children Clearances

### *Working with students*

Highvale Primary School values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms/with sports events/camps/excursions/school concerts/other events and programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act* and the Child Safe Standards, Highvale Primary School is required to undertake suitability checks which in most cases will involve asking for evidence of a Working with Children (WWC) Clearance and may also involve undertaking reference, proof of identity, qualification and work history involving children checks.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that Highvale Primary School is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Clearance and produce their valid card to the Highvale Primary School office for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are not parent/family members** of any student at the school if they are engaged in child-related work regardless of whether they are being supervised.
- **Parent/family volunteers** who are assisting with any classroom or school activities involving direct contact with children in circumstances where the volunteer's child is **not** participating, or does not ordinarily participate in, the activity.
- **Parent/family volunteers** who assist with excursions (including swimming), camps and similar events, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.
- **Parent/family volunteers** who regularly assist in school activities, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.
- **Parent/community School Council members** sitting on School Council with student School Council members, regardless of whether their own child is a student member or not.

In addition, depending on the nature of the volunteer work, our school may ask the volunteer to provide other suitability checks at its discretion (for example, references, work history involving children and/or qualifications). Proof of identity may also be required in some circumstances.

### *Non child-related work*

On some occasions, parents and other members of the school community may volunteer to do work that is not child-related. For example, volunteering on the weekend for gardening, maintenance, working bees, parents and friends club coordination, school council, participating in sub-committees of school council, fete coordination, other fundraising groups that meet in the evenings, during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present.

Volunteers for this type of work are not required to have WWC Clearances or other suitability checks as they are not engaged in child-related work and children are not generally present during these activities. However, Example

School reserves the right to undertake suitability checks, including requiring proof of identity and WWC Clearance, at its discretion if considered necessary for any particular activities or circumstances.

School council members and volunteers on any sub-committee of School Council will be asked to provide evidence of a valid WWC Clearance. Whilst we acknowledge that these volunteers will not be engaging in child-related work as part of their role, even when there is a student sitting on the School Council, we believe that it is important that our volunteers who are involved in making important decisions about our school which will have an impact on students do have a valid WWC Clearance.

## **Training and induction**

Under the Child Safe Standards volunteers must have an appropriate induction and training in child safety and wellbeing.

To support us to maintain a child safe environment, before engaging in any work where children are present or reasonably likely to be present, volunteers must familiarise themselves with the policies, procedures and code of conduct referred to in our Child Safety Induction Pack and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering for our school.

Depending on the nature and responsibilities of their role, Highvale Primary School may also require volunteers to complete additional child safety training.

## **Management and supervision**

Volunteer workers will be expected to comply with any reasonable direction of the principal (or their nominee). This will include the requirement to follow our school's policies, including, but not limited to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, our Child Safety Code of Conduct and our Statement of Values and School Philosophy.

Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with Department of Education and Training policies, to the extent that they apply to volunteer workers, including the Department's policies relating to [Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination](#), [Sexual Harassment](#) and [Workplace Bullying](#).

The principal (or their nominee) will determine the level of school staff supervision required for volunteers, depending on the type of work being performed, and with a focus on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students.

The principal has the discretion to make a decision about the ongoing suitability of a volunteer worker and may determine at any time whether or not a person is suitable to volunteer at Highvale Primary School.

## **Privacy and information-sharing**

Volunteers must ensure that any student information they become aware of because of their volunteer work is managed sensitively and in accordance with the [Schools' Privacy Policy](#) and the Department's policy on [Privacy and Information Sharing](#).

Under these policies, student information can and should be shared with relevant school staff to:

- support the student's education, wellbeing and health;
- reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm to the student, other students, staff or visitors;
- make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the student's disability; or
- provide a safe and secure workplace.

Volunteers must immediately report any child safety concerns that they become aware of to a member of staff to ensure appropriate action. There are some circumstances where volunteers may also be obliged to disclose

information to authorities outside of the school such as to Victoria Police. For further information on child safety responding and reporting obligations refer to: *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*.

## **Records management**

While it is unlikely volunteers will be responsible for any school records during their volunteer work, any school records that volunteers are responsible for must be provided to the Highvale Primary School office administration staff to ensure they are managed in accordance with the Department's policy: [Records Management – Schools](#).

## **Compensation**

### *Personal injury*

Volunteer workers are covered by the Department of Education and Training's Workers' Compensation Policy if they suffer personal injury in the course of engaging in school work.

### *Property damage*

If a volunteer worker suffers damage to their property in the course of carrying out school work, the Minister (or delegate) may authorise such compensation as they consider reasonable in the circumstances. Claims of this nature should be directed to the principal who will direct them to the Department's Legal Division.

### *Public liability insurance*

The Department of Education and Training's public liability insurance policy applies when a volunteer worker engaged in school work is legally liable for:

- a claim for bodily injury to a third party
- damage to or the destruction of a third party's property.

# Visitors Policy

## PURPOSE

To provide a safe and secure learning and teaching environment for students and staff by establishing processes to monitor and manage visitors to Highvale Primary School.

## SCOPE

This policy outlines our school's arrangements for visitors who attend school grounds when the school is open for instruction between the hours of 9:00am and 3:30pm. Students are likely to be present on the school grounds before school from 8:45am and after school until 3:45pm. The office staff monitor/receive visitors, including parents, contractors and any other visitors, at reception from 8:00am to 4:00pm. Outside of these times, our front office is not staffed and the only visitors who are permitted on school grounds are parents/carers or their delegates who are dropping off or picking up students from OSHC, school events such as parent-teacher interviews, concerts, sport or other school activities, community and other groups who have entered into contracts or agreements with the school to use school premises outside of school hours and after school clubs.

## DEFINITIONS

*Child-related work:* As defined by the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic), child-related work is work that usually involves direct contact (including in person, over the phone, written and online communication) with a child that is a central part of that person's duties. It does not include work that involves occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to the work.

## POLICY

Highvale Primary School strives to create an open and inclusive school community, and encourages parents and carers to be actively involved in their child's development and education. We also strive to foster strong partnerships with local community services, schools and other organisations.

Highvale Primary School is not a public place. The principal has the authority to permit or deny entry to school grounds, and encourages all visitors to familiarise themselves with our school's *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*, *Child Safety Policy*, *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, and *Volunteers Policy*.

From time to time, different members of the public may visit our school. Visitors may include, but are not limited to:

- Parents
- Volunteers – see our school's Volunteers Policy for more information
- Prospective parents, students and employees
- Invited speakers, sessional instructors and others addressing learning and development
- Public officials (e.g. Members of Parliament, local councillors)
- Persons conducting business e.g.: uniform suppliers, booksellers, official school photographers, commercial salespeople
- Tradespeople
- Children's services agencies
- Talent scouts
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing workers
- Victoria Police
- Persons authorised to enter school premises (e.g. Worksafe inspectors, health officers etc)
- Other Department of Education and Training staff (including allied health staff) or contractors



- NDIS therapists or other allied health or health practitioners

## Sign in procedure

All visitors to Highvale Primary School are required to report to the school office on arrival. Visitors must:

- Record their name, date and time of visit and purpose of visit via Compass kiosk (a message will be sent to the visiting person's phone to notify them of the arrival).
- Wear a visitor's lanyard, which will be issued. This must be worn during their time at school.
- Provide proof of identification to office staff upon request
- Produce evidence of their valid Working with Children Clearance where required by this policy (see below)
- Follow instruction from school staff and abide by all relevant school policies relating to appropriate conduct on school grounds including [insert relevant policies eg: Child Safety Code of Conduct, Respect for School Staff, Statement of Values and School Philosophy etc] as well as Department policies such as the [Sexual Harassment Policy](#) and [Workplace Bullying Policy](#)
- Return to the office upon departure, sign out and return visitor's lanyard

Highvale Primary School will ensure that our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct is available and visible to visitors when they sign in.

## Working with Children Clearance and other suitability checks

For Working with Children (WWC) Check and other suitability check requirements relating to parents/carers and other volunteers working with students please see our Volunteers Policy.

All visitors who are engaged in **child-related work** (see definition above) must have a valid WWC Clearance. Additional suitability checks may also be required such as reference, proof of identity, qualification and work history involving children checks.

In some circumstances, visitors to Highvale Primary School who are **not** engaged in child-related work will also be required to produce a valid WWC Clearance depending on the particular circumstances of their visit. For example, Highvale Primary School will require a valid WWC Clearance for:

- **visitors who will be working regularly with children** during the time they are visiting, even though direct contact with children is not a central part of their normal duties
- **visitors (e.g. contractors)**, who will regularly be performing unsupervised work at the school during school hours or any other time where children are present. Further background checks, including references, may also be requested at the discretion of the principal.

Visitors who will be working in areas away from students (e.g. a visiting auditor who will be located in the front office with administration staff) or who will be supervised and accompanied by a staff member during their visit (e.g. a Member of Parliament, a journalist, a prospective parent on a school tour) will not be required to have a WWC Clearance.

Sworn Victoria Police officers or sworn Australian Federal Police officers are exempt from requiring a WWC Check, but may be asked to verify that they are sworn officers by providing proof of identification.

## Invited speakers and presenters

On occasion, Highvale Primary School may invite external speakers or providers to deliver incursions, presentations, workshops and special programs for our students. Consistent with Department of Education and Training requirements, Highvale Primary School will:

- ensure that the content of presentations and programs by external providers contributes to the educational development of our students and is consistent with curriculum objectives
- ensure that any proposed visit, programs or content delivered by visitors complies with the requirement that education in Victorian government schools is secular and is consistent with the values of public education, Department policies and the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic). In particular, programs delivered by visitors are to be delivered in a manner that supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy including a commitment to:
  - elected government
  - the rule of law
  - equal rights for all before the law
  - freedom of religion, speech and association
  - the values of openness and tolerance
  - respect for the range of views held by students and their families.

## **Parent visitors**

We understand that there may occasionally be a reason why a parent or carer may want to speak to or see their child at school, during school hours.

If there is a particular pressing or unavoidable issue that cannot wait until the end of the school day, we ask that parents or carers call the school office to make the request to speak to or see their child during school hours.

We also ask that parents avoid arranging to visit their children at school wherever possible, as this can cause inappropriate disruptions to the school day.






All parents or carers who visit our school during school hours, other than for the purposes of school pick ups and drop offs or for specific school events (eg parent teacher interviews, concerts, assemblies etc), are required to sign in as a visitor at the school office.

Parents or carers who are prohibited from entering the school under a court order or direction of the Principal are not permitted to visit the school. Our school maintains and provides office staff with a list of restricted parents/carers which may include identifying photographs and any other information as required depending on the level of risk posed.

## **Other visitors**

All business operators, tradespeople and other visitors attending the school to conduct work must report to the school office upon arrival for instruction and follow the sign in procedure outlined above.

**Scope:** This Policy applies to all employees, visitors, volunteers and contractors in Department of Education and Training (DET) workplaces and activities, and instances when performing work offsite. The Department commits, so far as reasonably practicable, to:

<b>Management Commitment</b> 	<p><b>Support and value its people and recognise a legal and moral commitment to building a positive workplace culture, ensuring healthy and safe working and learning environments by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing and integrating a robust and credible, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Management System that aligns with legislative requirements and the Department's strategic direction and operations</li> <li>providing and maintaining inclusive workplaces that mitigate risks to physical and psychological health and safety</li> <li>outlining expectations and accountabilities, and empowering leaders and employees to play an active role in maintaining healthy and safe workplaces</li> <li>embedding and promoting a culture of shared responsiveness, willingness, and ownership, relating to reporting, and addressing health, safety and wellbeing risks</li> <li>providing and applying a robust injury management framework to foster and build a strong culture of early intervention, rehabilitation and return to work.</li> </ul>
<b>Consultation Commitment</b> 	<p><b>Consult, collaborate, and communicate with employees including health and safety representatives on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifying hazards, assessing risks, and making decisions about the measures to control risks to health and safety and proposed changes to the workplace that may affect the health, safety, and wellbeing of persons</li> <li>health, safety, and wellbeing issue resolution</li> <li>provision of health, safety and wellbeing information, training, instruction, and supervision</li> <li>the importance of giving employees a reasonable timeframe to express their views and concerns and that these are taken into account when making decisions that may affect their health, safety and wellbeing</li> <li>flexible work arrangements and family friendly work practices to support and maintain an inclusive, diverse, respectful adaptive workforce.</li> </ul>
<b>Drive Continuous HSW Improvement Commitment</b> 	<p><b>Support continual health, safety and wellbeing improvement by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improving the suitability and effectiveness of the OHS Management System through regular monitoring and review of policies and procedures</li> <li>establishing and monitoring progress towards measurable objectives and targets aimed at reducing work-related injury and ill health and improving safety performance</li> <li>using data to provide an evidence-based approach for setting the Department's strategic direction and identifying measurable objectives and targets</li> <li>allocating adequate resources to efficiently integrate and maintain the OHS Management System to comply with relevant legal and compliance obligations.</li> </ul>
<b>Building Capability Commitment</b> 	<p><b>Support building capability by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>embedding individual health, safety, and wellbeing accountabilities for all employees across the Department</li> <li>embedding legislative and Department health and safety requirements in all policies and procedures</li> <li>increasing awareness and improving utilisation of the safety supports and resources available</li> <li>providing access to transparent and robust health, safety and wellbeing information, training, instruction, and documentation</li> <li>strengthening leadership capability by improving understanding of applying and implementing health, safety and wellbeing supports and resources available.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk Management Commitment</b> 	<p><b>Support the prevention of workplace injuries and ill health by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strengthening systems of work for identifying, assessing, controlling, monitoring, and reviewing hazards and associated risks arising from task / workplace activities</li> <li>proactively aiming to identify hazards and eliminate (if not possible, minimise) risks, in the workplace by implementing controls in a timely manner</li> <li>promoting and improving the reporting of incidents, near misses, injuries and hazards and investigating where appropriate, to prevent reoccurrence</li> <li>providing an OHS Management System that is flexible and adaptable to the risk profile of Department workplaces</li> <li>implementing risk controls to achieve improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce psychosocial hazards in the workplace.</li> </ul>

The Department employees, visitors, volunteers and contractors are required to take reasonable care for their own health, safety and wellbeing and others that may be affected by their actions or omissions. These parties will cooperate with the Department in adhering to health and safety requirements including following the Department's policies, procedures and/or instructions and participating in consultation and training.

The Department's OHS Management System sets out how this policy is to be implemented.



**Jenny Atta**  
Secretary  
19/01/2022

## **Required Conduct & Behaviour**

All volunteers are expected to abide by the workplace code of conduct while on site.

This includes:

- No smoking on school grounds or within four metres of an entrance to all Department workplaces.
- No alcohol or drugs are to be consumed on any Department premises. Any volunteer under the influence will be dismissed.
- No offensive language is permitted on any Department premises.
- Noise must be kept to a minimum. If this is not practicable, then non-urgent work should be scheduled outside of school hours, where possible.
- Possessions, materials and equipment should be secured and not left unattended.
- Abide by the workplace traffic management procedures.
- Entrance to other areas of the Department workplace aside from the work area is prohibited, unless otherwise agreed to.
- Remove all litter and debris from the workplace.
- Report any problems, hazards or incidents to the Principal, Assistant Principal or Office Admin Team.
- Dress appropriately and where the correct personal protective equipment is suitable.
- No pets are permitted on Department premises.

## **Access Arrangements**

### **Access**

All volunteers must report to the general office and sign in upon arrival at the workplace or designated point where not on Department premises. This requirement is indicated on signage located at all entrances to the school, see below: ATTENTION ALL PERSONS MUST complete an induction BEFORE undertaking any works or disturbing materials on this school site.

### **Traffic Management**

Volunteers driving vehicles are to enter and exit the school grounds via the following locations: Ashton Street Entrance (front of school). Designated pedestrian crossings are located at Ashton Street & Grantley Drive.

Vehicles entering school grounds must adhere to all traffic signage. Where there is no signage, vehicles are to move at walking pace at all times. If a vehicle has limited visibility or mobility, a spotter should be used when the vehicle is in motion.

Volunteers should park in the streets outside the school. Please do not park in the staff carpark or turning circle.

## **Site specific hazards**

### **Asbestos**

All schools are expected to have a Schools Asbestos Management Plan in the event of the discovery of suspected asbestos containing material (ACM) or the accidental disturbance of existing ACM.

If ACM has been identified in the school, the following process must be followed prior to the commencement of works:

- Asbestos Register MUST be checked at the time of sign-in when the proposed work involves drilling, scraping, sanding, sawing or any other destructive process.

- if work is to be carried out in the vicinity of Asbestos Containing Material, the Asbestos Coordinator Kelly Soccio must be consulted prior to the commencement of work.
- asbestos containing material may only be removed by a licensed removalist.

## **Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods**

If transporting hazardous substances or dangerous goods onto site, the Workplace Manager/ Management OHS Nominee must be informed. You must complete a Safe Work Method Statement or equivalent to outline the controls methods you will use to ensure that the risks of the hazardous substances and/or dangerous goods are managed.

Such controls may include, but are not limited to:

- the provision of Material/Safety Data Sheets (MSDS/SDS)
- correct labelling of containers
- correct storing and handling of containers
- correct disposal of any waste
- provision of Personal Protective Equipment.

## **Animals/Wildlife**

There is the potential to come into contact with domestic animals and wildlife while on this site. Should this occur you must:

- do not approach any domestic animals (e.g. dogs) or dangerous wildlife
- report the sighting of any domestic animals or dangerous wildlife to the Principal, Assistant Principal or Admin Staff.
- do not reach into any holes or gaps in the buildings without first checking to see if it is safe.

## **Emergency Management**

### **Emergency Procedures**

On hearing the alarm:

- switch off all equipment
- proceed to the advised assembly area
- report to one of the wardens dressed in a fluro vest
- do not leave the assembly area until advised.

### **Leaving Site in an Emergency**

All volunteers are required to proceed to the evacuation point and remain there until given clearance to leave by the Incident Controller or Workplace Manager.

### **Evacuation Point**

The evacuation point is located at the Basketball Court; refer to Evacuation Map (Appendix A).

### **Emergency Contacts School contacts**

Principal	Carly Epskamp	<b>03 9887 8000</b>
Assistant Principal	Kelly Soccio	<b>03 9887 8000</b>
Business Manager	Fiona Figg	<b>03 9887 8000</b>
Office Manager	As Above	<b>03 9887 8000</b>
General Office Number		<b>03 9887 8000</b>

# Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

## PURPOSE

The Highvale Primary School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

## SCOPE

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority
- student
- volunteer.

## Statement of commitment to child safety

Highvale Primary School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer, questioning and

asexual (LGBTIQA+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences. Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **School leadership team**

Our school leadership team (comprising the principal, assistant principal) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and assistant principals will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of, and responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

### **School staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

### **School council**

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety, NOTE: school councils can use the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy.



## Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Our principal and Assistant Principal are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Principal and Assistant Principal are responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach a PCO if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The Principal and Assistant Principal are responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

## Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

## Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## Establishing a culturally safe environment

At Highvale Primary School, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Begin events and meetings with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item. Use this as an opportunity to pause and reflect or open a discussion.
- Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school grounds.
- Be open to different ways of doing and expressing things.
- Build school wide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes.

## Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Highvale Primary School, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct, our school values and whole school approach to student behaviour.

We inform students of their rights through our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on



concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns at <https://highvaleps.vic.edu.au/>

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

**At Highvale Primary School, we empower students to contribute to school life by;**

- Display visually engaging and easy-to-read posters promoting student voice and agency.
- Discuss commitment to student's voice at enrolment and organise orientation activities focused on activating student's voice.
- Conduct year-level meetings and form groups to discuss students' rights and safety issues.
- Invite students to provide feedback on school-wide decisions and take their views into account in school decision-making.
- Document student participation in activities that contribute to the life of the school.
- Involve students in consultation processes and inform them of their impact on decision-making.
- Demonstrate that the school takes students seriously by acting on their concerns, noting that what might seem unimportant to an adult may be important to a young person.
- Provide students who find it harder to speak up or be heard with multiple avenues for communicating, including writing, drawing, or physical forms of communication.

## Family engagement

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Highvale Primary School we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- seeking input from families and the community through the parent portal, school website, newsletters, other communications, school council, subcommittees of school council, student, staff, and parent meetings etc.
- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents at <https://highvaleps.vic.edu.au/>
- School Newsletters and Compass will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school

## Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students

- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

### Suitable staff and volunteers

At Highvale Primary School, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

#### Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)
- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management.](#)

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
  - o proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - o the person's history of working with children
  - o references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
  - o references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

#### Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

#### Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by having regular performance reviews.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

#### Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy

<https://highvaleps.vic.edu.au/community/documents-policies-forms/> which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

### Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

### School council training and education

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Highvale Primary School child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

### Complaints and reporting processes

Highvale Primary School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found at

<https://highvaleps.vic.edu.au/community/documents-policies-forms/>

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures <https://highvaleps.vic.edu.au/community/documents-policies-forms/> Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

<https://highvaleps.vic.edu.au/community/documents-policies-forms/>

### Communications

Highvale Primary School is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school
- updates in our school newsletter and Compass
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

### Privacy and information sharing

Highvale Primary School collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

### Records management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

# Child Safety Code of Conduct

## Purpose

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of adults with children and young people in our school.

All Highvale Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, school council members and any other adult involved in child-connected work must follow the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct applies to all physical and online environments used by students. It also applies during or outside of school hours and in other locations provided by the school for student use (for example, a school camp).

## Acceptable behaviours

As Highvale Primary School, staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of our school community involved in child-connected work, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding our Highvale Primary School commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- treating students and families in our school community with respect in our school environment and outside our school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they disclose that they or another child or student has been abused or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer, questioning and asexual (LGBTIQA+) students
- ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student – one-to-one interactions between an adult and a student are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult.
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the Principal or Assistant Principal.
- understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) in line with our child safety responding and reporting policy and procedures and the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#).
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

## Unacceptable behaviours

As Highvale Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors and member of our school community involved in child-connected work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, by offering gifts)
- display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context
- ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student
- discuss intimate topics or use sexualised language, except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance
- treat a child or student unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter

- photograph or video a child or student in a school environment except in accordance with the [Photographing, Filming and Recording Students policy](#) or where required for duty of care purposes
- consume alcohol against school policy or take illicit drugs in the school environment or at school events where students are present
- have contact with any student outside of school hours except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance and parental permission has been sought.

### **Breaches to the Child Safety Code of Conduct**

All Highvale Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work who breach this Child Safety Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with their employment agreement or relevant industrial instrument, professional code or terms of engagement.

In instances where a reportable allegation has been made, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Department of Education and Training Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy and may be subject to referral to Victoria Police.

All breaches and suspected breaches of the Highvale Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct must be reported to the Principal and Assistant Principal on 9887 8000.

If the breach or suspected breach relates to the principal, contact the Assistant Principal.

# Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures our school has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse and to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand and follow the various legal obligations that apply to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school (physical and online).

## DEFINITIONS

### Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- physical violence inflicted on a child
- sexual offences committed against a child
- grooming of a child by an adult
- family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include student to student incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

### Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child under the age of 16 to engage in sexual activity at a later time, either with the groomer or with another adult. Grooming can include communicating (including electronic communications and communicating by conduct) and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

### School staff member

For the purpose of this policy a school staff member includes a contractor engaged by the school or school council to perform child-related work.

## POLICY

Highvale Primary School understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse. We have a range of policies and measures in place to prevent child abuse from occurring at our school or during school activities.

### Information for students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at Highvale Primary School they should start with the Principal or Assistant Principal

## Identifying child abuse

To ensure we can respond in the best interests of students and children when complaints or concerns relating to child abuse are raised, all staff and relevant volunteers must:

- understand how to identify signs of child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators - for detailed information on identifying child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators refer to [Identify child abuse](#).
- understand their various legal obligations in relation to reporting child abuse to relevant authorities - for detailed information on the various legal obligations refer to Appendix A
- follow the below procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure our school acts in the best interests of students and children and complies with both our legal and Department policy obligations.

At Highvale Primary School we recognise the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering and responding to child safety incidents or concerns.

## Procedures for responding to an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse

In responding to a child safety incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, Highvale Primary School will follow:

- the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) for complaints and concerns relating to all forms of child abuse
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending
- our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy for complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful student behaviours.

### School staff and volunteer responsibilities

#### 1. Immediate action

If a school staff member or volunteer witnesses an incident of child abuse, or reasonably believes, suspects or receives a disclosure or allegation that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid (appropriate to their level of training) and call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Notify the principal, assistant principal or a member of the leadership team as soon as possible, who will ensure our school follows the steps in these procedures.

NOTE for staff and volunteers:

- if you are uncertain if an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion gives rise to a concern about child abuse you must always err on the side of caution and report the concern to the principal or assistant principal.
- If the Principal or Assistant Principal is unavailable, Emily Dvorscek (Wellbeing Leader) will take on this role.
- If the concerns relates to the conduct of Emily Dvorscek, notify the principal or the [relevant regional office](#) who must then take on responsibility for ensuring our school follows these procedures.

Refer to Appendix B for guidance on how to respond to a disclosure of child abuse.

#### 2. Reporting to authorities and referring to services

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, the Principal, Assistant Principal or Wellbeing Leader **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible.



The following steps will ensure our school complies with the four critical actions as well as additional actions required under the Child Safe Standards.

The staff member must ensure:

- all relevant information is reported to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, Victoria Police or relevant services where required
- the incident is reported to the Department's [eduSafe Plus portal](#) or the Incident Support and Operations Centre (1800 126 126) in accordance with the severity rating outlined in the [Managing and Reporting School Incidents Policy](#)
- all [reportable conduct](#) allegations or incidents are reported by the Principal to the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (03 7022 0005) – where a reportable conduct allegation is made against the Principal, the Regional Director must be informed who will then make a report to Employee Conduct Branch

NOTE: In circumstances where staff members are legally required to report child abuse to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police and they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another person at the school or the designated member of school staff does not agree that a report needs to be made, the staff member who has formed the reasonable belief must still contact DFFH Child Protection and Victoria Police to make the report.

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST or The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support) DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

### **3. Contacting parents or carers**

The nominated staff member must ensure parents and carers are notified unless advised otherwise by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns in relation to informing parents/carers.

Principals may contact the Department of Education Legal Division for advice on notifying parents and carers, and where relevant, the wider school community.

For further guidance, refer to [PROTECT Contacting parents and carers](#)

### **4. Ongoing protection and support**

The Principal, Assistant Principal or Wellbeing Leader must ensure appropriate steps are taken by the school to protect the child and other children from any continued risk of abuse. These steps must be taken in consultation with any relevant external agency or Department staff such as DFFH Child Protection, Victoria Police, Legal Division or Employee Conduct Branch. Ongoing protection will also include further reports to authorities if new information comes to light or further incidents occur.

Appropriate, culturally sensitive and ongoing support must be offered and provided to all affected students. Ongoing support will be based on any available advice from the Department, parents and carers, health practitioners, and other authorities (such as DFFH or Victoria Police) and may include referral to wellbeing professionals, development of a safety plan, student support group meetings, and, for student to student incidents, behaviour management and support measures.

### **5. Recordkeeping**

The Principal, Assistant Principal or Wellbeing Leader will ensure that:

- detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion are taken using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) or the [Responding to Student Sexual Offending: template](#) including, where possible, by the staff member or volunteer who reported the incident, disclosure, or suspicion to them
- detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by the school to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion

- all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including the schools immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in the office.

## For school visitors and school community members

All community members aged 18 years or over have legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse – refer to Appendix A for detailed information.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details, refer to the [Four Critical Actions](#).

Members of the community do not have to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to DFFH Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken

## Additional requirements for all staff

All staff play an important role in supporting student safety and wellbeing and have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in the above procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse. This means that if, after following the actions outlined in the procedure, a staff member reasonably believes that a child remains at risk of abuse, they must take the following steps:

- if they are concerned that the school has not taken reasonable steps to prevent or reduce the risk, raise these concerns with the principal in the first instance, and escalate to the regional office if they remain unsatisfied.
- report the matter to the relevant authorities where they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another staff member

Staff must refer to Appendix A for further information on their obligations relating to reporting to authorities.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website (or insert other online parent, carer, student communication method)
- Included in staff induction processes and annual staff training
- Included in volunteer induction processes and training for relevant volunteers
- Discussed at annual staff briefings or meetings
- Included in staff handbook
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following Department of Education policies and guidance are relevant to this policy:

- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#)
- [Managing and Reporting School Incidents](#)
- [Reportable Conduct](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)
- [Identify child abuse](#)
- [Report child abuse in schools \(including four critical actions\)](#)
- [Identify and respond to student sexual offending](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this policy:

- Child Safety [and Wellbeing] Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy

## APPENDIX A

### LEGAL OBLIGATIONS RELATING TO REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

The following information outlines the various legal obligations relating to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

It is important to note that the procedures outlined in the above policy ensure compliance with the below reporting obligations, and also include additional steps to ensure compliance with Department policy and our school's duty of care obligations.

#### **Mandatory reporting to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection**

The following individuals are mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic):

- registered teachers and early childhood teachers (including principals and school staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT)
- school counsellors including staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing, including (but not limited to) school health and wellbeing staff, primary welfare coordinators, student wellbeing coordinators, mental health practitioners, chaplains, and Student Support Services staff
- nurses
- registered psychologists
- police officers
- registered medical practitioners
- out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
- early childhood workers
- youth justice workers
- people in religious ministry
- midwives

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse; and
- the child's parents or carers have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Highvale Primary School to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the principal or any other mandatory reporter does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

If charged with not making a mandatory report, it may be a defence for the person charged to prove that they honestly and reasonably believed that all of the reasonable grounds for their belief had been the subject of a report to child protection made by another person.

The identity of a person who reports any protective concerns to DFFH Child Protection is protected by law. It is an offence for a person, other than the person who made the report, to disclose the name of the person who made a report or any information that is likely to lead to their identification.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module* annually.

The policy of the Department of Education requires **all staff** who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to discuss their concerns with the school leadership team and to report their concerns to DFFH and in some circumstances to Victoria Police, or to ensure that all the information relevant to the report has been made by another school staff member.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection even if they are not a mandatory reporter listed above.

### **Reporting student wellbeing concerns to Child FIRST/Orange Door**

At Highvale Primary we also encourage staff to make a referral to Child FIRST/Orange Door when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST/Orange Door see the Policy and Advisory Library: [Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#).

### **Reportable Conduct**

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is focussed on worker and volunteer conduct and how organisations investigate and respond to suspected child abuse. The scheme aims to improve organisational responses to suspected child abuse and to facilitate the identification of individuals who pose a risk of harm to children.

There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*:

- sexual offences against, with or in the presence of, a child
- sexual misconduct (which includes grooming) against, with or in the presence of, a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of, a child
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

A reportable conduct allegation is made where a person makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief, that a worker or volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that **may** involve reportable conduct.

If school staff or volunteers become aware of reportable conduct by any current or former employee, contractor or volunteer, they must notify the school principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the principal, they must notify the Regional Director.

The principal or regional director must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former employees of the school (including Department, allied health, casual and school council employees), contractors and volunteers (including parent volunteers).

- Employee Conduct Branch: 03 7022 0005 or [employee.conduct@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:employee.conduct@education.vic.gov.au)

The Department's Secretary, through the Manager, Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

For more information about reportable conduct see the Department's *Policy and Advisory Library*: [Reportable Conduct](#) and the Commission for Children and Young People's [website](#).

## **Failure to disclose offence**

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (ie persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 in Victoria.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000, local police station or the Police Assistance Line 131 444) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

"Reasonable excuse" is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed to Victoria Police and you have no further information to add (for example, through a mandatory report to DFFH Child Protection or a report to Victoria Police from another member of school staff).

## **Failure to protect offence**

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult (ie persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

## **Further information**

For more information about the offences and reporting obligations outlined in this fact sheet refer to: [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#).

## APPENDIX B: MANAGING DISCLOSURES OF CHILD ABUSE

### Important information for staff

#### ***When managing a disclosure relating to child abuse you should:***

- listen to the student and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals, and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you")
- Take prompt action in relation to following the procedures outlined below.

#### ***When managing a disclosure you should AVOID:***

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making any promises you will keep the information the student provided confidential
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).



## FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

# Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicious of Child Abuse

## 1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**



If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
  - administering first aid
  - calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
  - identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.
- Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

## 2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

← *Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?* →

### WITHIN THE SCHOOL

#### VICTORIA POLICE

You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

#### GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre

#### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

#### INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

#### GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- Employee Conduct Branch

#### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Diocesan education office

#### INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

### WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

#### DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

#### VICTORIA POLICE

You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

#### GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre

#### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

#### INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or chairperson.

## YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief\* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

\* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

### OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

## 3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- **how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

## 4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

## CONTACT

### DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

#### AREA

- North Division **1300 664 977**
- South Division **1300 655 795**
- East Division **1300 360 391**
- West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
- West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

#### AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**.

#### CHILD FIRST

<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

#### ORANGE DOOR

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

### VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

#### DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE

- 1800 126 126

#### INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT

- 1800 126 126

#### EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

- (03) 9637 2595

#### DIOCESAN OFFICE

- Melbourne (03) 9267 0228
- Ballarat (03) 5337 7135
- Sale (03) 5622 6600
- Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377

### INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

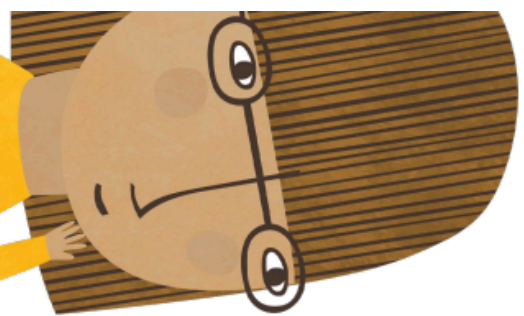
#### VICTORIA

- (03) 9825 7200

#### THE LOOKOUT

The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <http://www.lookout.org.au>.

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.



PROTECT



## APPENDIX A EVACUATION MAP



# Highvale Primary School Evacuation Map

