



Mickleham Primary School Child Safety Policy (contains Commitment Child Safety Standard 2)

Our Commitment to Child Safety

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

Mickleham Primary School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. Our school is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. As a community we support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. Mickleham Primary School has specific policies, procedures and training in place to support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our Children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Mickleham Primary School. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal Children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct and practices in place to ensure that any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Training and Supervision

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

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Mickleham Primary School's commitment to Child Safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to Mickleham Primary School's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

Mickleham Primary School takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it employs the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We develop selection criteria which clearly demonstrates our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Alongside the Department of Education and Training (DET) recruitment processes, we will ensure our recruitment processes do include:

- Selection Criteria in job descriptions
- VIT registration for teachers – which includes a Criminal Records Check
- Criminal Records Checks where applicable for other employees
- Working with Children Checks where applicable for other employees
- Face-to-face interviews
- Detailed reference checks from previous employers, including from the applicant's most recent principal if applicable

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

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form¹, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

¹ Mickleham Primary School Incident Report Form

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities

Mickleham Primary School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who has a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offense to a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to the police.²
- Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sex abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.³
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.⁴

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Mickleham Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations. We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

² 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 <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

³ Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>

⁴ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, 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.

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

- A child states that they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed⁵
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal Communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

This Policy was ratified by school council on

The Policy will next be reviewed on

Glossary Of Terms

<u>TERM</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>
The Act	<i>Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005</i>
Aboriginal Child	A person under the age of 18 who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent • Identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and • Is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community
Child Abuse	For the purposes of these standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical violence • Sexual offences • Serious emotional or psychological abuse • Serious neglect Further explanation of these types of abuse is provided in the section 'What is child abuse?'
Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis
Child	A person who is under the age of 18
Child Safety	In the context of the Child Safe Standards, child safety means measures to protect children from abuse
Child Safe Organisation	In the context of the Child Safe Standards, a child safe organisation is one that meets the Child Safe Standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse
Cultural competency	A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations
Cultural abuse	Actions and attitudes that deliberately ignore, denigrate or attack the culture of a person or community

⁵ For example behaviour, please see An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au>

<p>Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children</p>	<p>The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.</p> <p>A culturally safe environment does not ignore, challenge or deny cultural identity. Cultural safety upholds the rights of Aboriginal children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify as Aboriginal without fear of retribution or questioning • Have an education that strengthens their culture and identity • Maintain connections to their land and country • Maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations • Be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders • Receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner • Be involved in services that are culturally respectful
<p>Cultural Safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds</p>	<p>An environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need. Efforts need to be made to ensure the culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and their families receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner, including in relevant community languages.</p>
<p>Children with a disability</p>	<p>A disability can be any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with a disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden.</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>The <i>Child Safety and Wellbeing Act of 2005</i> (the Act) will provide that the standards apply to 'applicable entities', which are defined in the Act as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An incorporated body or association • An unincorporated body or association (however structured) • An individual who carries on a business and engages contractors, employees or volunteers to assist in the business in providing services or facilities.