



DEBNEY MEADOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Child Safe Policy

Rationale

Debney Meadows Primary is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

Debney Meadows Primary School has a duty of care to the children in its community. Children have a right to feel safe, to be who they are regardless of sexuality, gender, culture or belief. A safe school does not discriminate and values each child as an individual.

The objective of this policy is:

- For staff to acknowledge and understand their Duty of Care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care.
- Provide professional development for all staff to identify risk indicators and behaviour that may suggest abuse, neglect and maltreatment.
- Develop a comprehensive process for reporting and referral if there is reasonable doubt of child abuse, neglect and maltreatment.
- Foster an environment where children feel they can disclose information without fear of recrimination or disbelief.
- Children to learn protective behaviours and build resilience to cope with the challenges they face within the school and without.
- Support the development of a culture of zero tolerance for child abuse and bullying.
- As a school community we are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives, where they feel comfortable to disclose.
- This approach will apply to all individuals in a non-discriminatory manner: whilst considering the individual circumstances of children who are identified as coming from higher risk groups such as, children with a disability, and those with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background.
- To communicate to every person involved with Debney Meadows Primary School that we as a community have a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In addition, the Statement of Commitment may describe the school's principles for child safety.

Implementation

In the planning and implementation for protecting all children Debney Meadows Primary School will:

1. Develop a range of strategies to inform and revisit child safety policy and procedures, and communicate to the students, staff, parents and wider community. Every member of the school community has a responsibility to make a report about child safety, including if you have concerns about the organisation's leadership.
2. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety through informing all staff the expectations required and appropriate steps for action to take if any concerns arise. DMPS will provide professional development, new staff induction, transition information for parents and updates in newsletters, process of referral and reporting, and explanation of duty of care.
3. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives. We will develop a strong classroom and school culture to foster this through the implementation of essential agreements, positive behaviour and strong connections to the teaching of attitudes, and teaching of protective behaviours and children's rights.
4. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children and create an environment where children feel safe and able to make disclosures.
5. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount.

6. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children, through newsletters and targeted communication.
7. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development. Have clear and robust recruiting strategies that include a rigorous process to include an interview and referee checking including a current Working with Children Check and Criminal History Check. Provide continual professional development to educate staff about relevant risk indicators and signs of child abuse and maltreatment.
8. Educate and create safe spaces within the school to ensure children know who to talk and what to do if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues.
9. Report any member of the community who displays any of the unacceptable behaviour as outlined in the checklist (Attachment 1) to emergency management; they will be asked to leave the grounds immediately while the incident is being investigated.
10. Ensure that all recruitment processes involve a thorough screening, including referee checks, current Working with Children Checks and Criminal History Checks.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed by School Council. It was ratified at School Council in May, 2019. It will be reviewed every three years.

References

Australian Institute of Family Studies (2013) *Risk and protective factors for child abuse and neglect* [online] Available at <<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/risk-and-protective-factors-child-abuse-and-neglect>> [Accessed 21 October 2016].

Victoria State Government (2016) *Child Protection- Reporting Obligations* [online] Available at <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>> [Accessed 21 October 2016].

Checklist to guarantee the safety of every child at D.M.P.S

Acceptable behaviour	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to the school's child safe policy. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students, who are statistically more likely to experience child abuse and maltreatment. https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/child-abuse-and-neglect-statistics 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm (if there is reasonable belief that a child is at-risk of harm). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership and/or Wellbeing Coordinator. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse. 	

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

Unacceptable Behaviours	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes¹. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy² or take illicit drugs under any circumstances. 	

1.
2.

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse



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 4 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).
- You must use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse** template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

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

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

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 or volunteer to Victoria Police.

You must also report **Internally** to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School Principal and/or leadership team
 - Employee Conduct Branch
 - DET Security Services Unit
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School Principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - School Principal and/or school chairperson

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**
You must also report to:
 - School Principal and/or leadership team
 - DET Security Services Unit
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
You must also report to:
 - School Principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
You must also report to:
 - School Principal and/or chairperson

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 (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DHHS Child Protection or 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).

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.

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 9777**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 360 391**
West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 9777**

AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 1278**

CHILD FIRST
www.dhs.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or your local police station

DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT
(03) 9589 6266
STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT
(03) 9637 2934
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

