



## Debney Meadows Primary School **Child Safe Standards Policy**

## Authorisation

### **Background**

Debney Meadows Primary School as part of the Victorian Government State School system is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people regardless of their age, culture, beliefs socio-economic circumstances, disability and family living situation. There is a culture of 'no acceptance' for child abuse.

Child abuse can be defined as an act by parents or caregivers, which endangers a child, or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time. In Victoria, under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005, a child or young person is a person under eighteen years of age. Child abuse can occur in the following ways:

- **Physical abuse** occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent, extended family or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.
- **Sexual abuse** occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. It includes fondling of the child's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.
- **Emotional abuse** occurs when a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child. This may involve name calling, put downs or continual coldness from the parent or caregiver, to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development.
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or likely to be significantly harmed. (Source: Department of Health and Human Services).

In response to the recommendations in 'Betrayal of Trust' Report, there are new regulations surrounding child safety, which are underpinned by the Child Safe Standards.

**Debney Meadows PS firmly believes that it is everyone's responsibility – School Council, the Principal, staff, parents, volunteers, students, visitors and service providers, to ensure that children are safe.**

Debney Meadows PS has created a Child Safety Standards Policy outlining how we will create and maintain a child safe school environment (this includes on school premises, camps, excursions, online and other school events) and are prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect.

### **Purpose:**

To ensure that Debney Meadows Primary School:

- Has a Child Safe Standards Policy demonstrating commitment to child safety in the seven standards.
- Is compliant with DET and the VRQA policies and procedures, the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and Ministerial Order No. 870.
- Develops the values and principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment.
- Details the actions it will take to promote child safety.
- Supports, encourages and enables School Council, the Principal, school staff, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.
- Support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
- Inform the school community about the Child Safe Standards.

### **Aim:**

- To prevent child abuse by identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- To ensure that processes and procedures are in place to protect children from child abuse.
- To value and empower children in decision-making processes.
- To ensure that all staff (including contractors), volunteers, visitors to the school and parents/carers, understand the school's child safety guidelines and how to behave appropriately with and towards children.
- To comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law.

### **Implementation:**

- The Principal has the overall responsibility of implementing this policy, but may delegate certain roles to suitably qualified staff.
- The school understands it has a shared responsibility for implementing the Child Safe Standards. Several external service providers engage with the school. The school understands that these organisations have their own regulatory body to ensure they meet the Child Safe Standards. The school will ensure that they have suitable qualifications and meet these standards.
- The Child Safe Standards and this policy will be communicated to the school community at least once a year in the following ways:
  - School Council:** brief/review of Child Safe Standards once a year and review of the policy every three years.
  - Staff:** briefing at the start of each school year and refresher at a staff meeting mid-year. New staff will have the Child Safe Standards included as part of their induction.
  - Parents:** information will be included in the newsletter at the beginning of the year and reminders throughout the year. All information regarding the Child Safe Standards will be on the school website.
  - Students:** as part of our safe and orderly environment, students will be briefed by their teachers on child safety.
- The school must implement the following minimum Child Safety Standards as per Ministerial Order No. 870 and will do so in the following ways:

### **Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including thorough effective leadership arrangements**

Debney Meadows Primary School will:

- Have goals/strategies in its Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan related to 'Positive Climate for Learning'.

- Create, maintain and monitor a school action plan related to student wellbeing in the school. This is regularly reviewed as part of the Leadership meetings.
- Assign the overall Student Wellbeing and Management role to a designated person.
- Ensure there is provision in the school budget to fund child safety and student welfare.
- Assign student wellbeing and eSmart as a core role of staff in the school and this will be reflected in the school role document.
- Have a Student Wellbeing Team and eSmart Team that meets at least 2 times per term.
- Schedule meetings with SSSO staff fortnightly to discuss student wellbeing, safety and educational needs.
- Have provision for Student Wellbeing support sessions in the school timetable – SEL sessions, art therapy, mentoring program, buddy program, SFYS interventions.
- Supporting all students’ safety and wellbeing through the PSD (Program for Students with a Disability).
- Assign meeting dates in the school calendar to allow for professional development related to child safety and staff training (e.g. Mandatory Reporting Training).
- Highly confidential issues will be kept in a locked file in the Wellbeing office. Reports from SSSO professionals will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the Store Room.
- ‘Welcome to Country’ and ‘Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians’ at each assembly.
- Review Child Safety as part of the annual report as per DET guidelines.

**Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety**

Debney Meadows Primary School has created a Child safe policy which will be approved by School Council and reviewed as part of the three year policy renewal process.

The following school policies support the Child Safe Standards Policy:

- Duty of Care
- Excursion Policy
- Mandatory Reporting
- Student Engagement
- Visitors

These policies will be available on the school website to view.

**Standard 3: A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children**

Debney Meadows Primary School has devised a Code of Conduct for all stakeholders and visitors.

- This will be reviewed and discussed yearly.
- This will be placed in a prominent place in the school and on the school website.

**Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel**

At Debney Meadows Primary School we:

Follow recruiting processes outlined by DET which will adhere to the Child Safe Standards.

During the application process assess the applicant’s:

- Motivation to work with children
- Relevant and verifiable child-related work experience
- Understanding of professional boundaries
- Communication skills

Selection panels will check the following:

- Two forms of identification e.g. driver’s licence, passport etc.
- Academic transcripts/qualifications

- Work history and previous employment details are accurate
- Gaps in the applicant's employment history and are there valid reasons for this e.g. travel, study, family leave

In regards to referees, panels will check the following:

- The applicant has provided the most current employer and/or manager
- There is not a personal relationship between the applicant's supervisor or manager that may affect the objectivity of the reference
- Has the referee directly supervised the applicant working with children?
- Would the person employ them again?
- Has the referee any concerns with the applicant working with children?
- Did the referee have any concerns about the applicant adhering to the organisations Code of Conduct?
- Have the referees observed the applicant managing the behaviour of a child and what did they notice?
- That any written referee statements are authentic.

At Debney Meadows Primary School, we will:

- Ensure all teachers have a current VIT (Victorian Institute of Teaching) card. Through VIT process teachers will undertake a police check (timing deemed by VIT)
- Keep a record of volunteers and have a copy of their Working with Children Check (WWCC).
- Sight WWCC of contractors and other visitors who enter the school.
- Have visitors sign into the school system at the office.
- Ensure all new staff are aware of Child Safe Standards and their obligations for mandatory reporting as part of the induction and mentoring process.
- Provision in the OHS Training schedule so that staff can update their Mandatory Reporting training each year (DET requirement).

#### **Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse**

- Debney Meadows Primary School has a Mandatory Reporting Policy outlining the school's response to suspected child abuse.
- All staff are trained yearly in this area.

As per the school policy:

- All members of the teaching service who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.
- All other school staff who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection or have significant concerns, are encouraged to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police or Child FIRST.
- All adults will be required to report to police if they know or reasonably believe that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. It will be a criminal offence to fail to comply with this obligation.
- Staff are encouraged to keep their own notes and discuss this with the Principal so she can update her files.

#### **Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of abuse**

At Debney Meadows Primary School, we:

- Monitor sick bay attendances and student absences each week and sometimes daily as part of Guiding Coalition meetings. Specific incidences, trends and children of concern will be discussed and an action plan put in place.

- Have a Duty of Care Policy outlining supervision requirements for students at school activities in and out of the school and online.
- Ask for parent permission to use photographs or video of students for public forums e.g. newspapers, online, newsletters.
- Keep photos and videos of students on a secure network.
- Provision for two yard duty staff to be rostered on each recess and two for lunch (lunch is split) and a first aid officer in the Office.
- Ensure planned excursions and camps adhere to the Child Safe Standards.
- Keep a risk register as part of OHS requirements, and conduct a Child Safety Risk Assessment using the attached rubric for all events and activities.
- Review risks after any incidences and adjustments are made if necessary.
- Ensure provisions are made for staff training and professional development around child safety.
- Ensure our school grounds are safe for children.

### **Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children**

At Debney Meadows Primary School, we:

- Display our school motto, *Work Hard and Be Kind*, throughout the school and weave this throughout learning in the school.
- Teach as part of the curriculum healthy, respectful relationships and resilience.

### **Resources**

The following resource can be accessed to support this policy:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect)

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle.