



Child Safe Policy

RATIONALE

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:

- the values and principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment
- the actions the school proposes to take to:
 - demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy or statement of commitment
 - support, encourage and enable 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
 - ensure that child safety is considered in the recruitment, selection and management of staff, including contractors and volunteers

AIM

This policy provides the policy framework for the School's commitment to the Child Safe Standards <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx> and the actions the School will take to meet these Standards.

IMPLEMENTATION

Scope

This policy applies on a 'whole of school basis' to the school community but with particular application to all staff, volunteers, contractors and any other external service provider used by the school, whether or not they work in direct contact with Knox Park PS students.

This policy will apply across all school activities, whether curriculum or extra-curricula activities, including activities or events occurring outside of school hours, and regardless of whether those activities occur on the school premises or at another location used by the school for the activity.

Knox Park PS will make partner organisations aware of this policy and the related Child Safety Code of Conduct and the school's commitment to maintaining Child Safety in all service agreements and by general communications to the public (for example, on the school website).

Knox Park PS will inform all applicants for jobs involving child-connected work about the School's Child Safety policies and practices, including the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Statement of Commitment and principles

Knox Park Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Knox Park Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Every child attending Knox Park Primary School has the right to feel safe and be safe when they attend the school. They have the right to be free of any physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse.

Knox Park Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people contribute to decisions that affect their lives and where staff, students and parents are supported, encouraged and enabled to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters .

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In meeting the Child Safety Standards Knox Park Primary School will take into account the diversity of all children, including but not limited to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and children who are vulnerable. Knox Park PS will do all it reasonably can to accommodate this diversity when meeting the Child Safe Standards.

Every person involved in Knox Park Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Knox Park Primary School's principles for child safety are

1. We take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. We value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
3. We foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children.
4. We report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment without delay to the appropriate authorities and in strict accordance with DET policies and procedures.
5. We share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.
6. We respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount.
7. We provide clear and accessible policy direction and written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children and we ensure the School's policy position is made clear to the public.
8. We adhere to the DET recruitment and related staffing, volunteer, contractor and service provider policies to engage only the most suitable people to work with children.
9. We maintain robust staff and volunteer supervision practices and implement appropriate professional development programs, in accordance with DET initiatives and requirements, in order to meet the Child Safety Standards.
10. We ensure children know whom to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and we support a school culture and environment where children (and their families) are informed about and comfortable with the process of disclosure and are encouraged to raise issues.
11. We recognise the value of communicating regularly with families and carers and we value their contributions to building and maintaining a child safe school.

The policy areas and procedures set out below represent Knox Park Primary School's approach to implementing and upholding the Child Safe Standards.

Failure to disclose

All adults, not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. Failure to disclose the information may amount to a criminal offence unless you have a "reasonable excuse" or have an "exemption" from doing so.

To read more information about the 'failure to disclose' offence, see: Department of Justice and Regulation – Failure to disclose offence

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<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+dis+close+offence>

Failure to Protect

Any staff member in a position of authority, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

The offence applies only to adults in a position of authority within an organisation. In a school context, this may include Principals, Assistant Principals, and Campus Principals.

To read more information about the 'failure to protect offence', see: Department of Justice and Regulations – Failure to protect offence.

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

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Principal and School Council will decide on a suitable person or people to serve as the School's point of contact for more information about this policy and initiatives derived from it; this may be in addition to any role which must be assigned under the School's procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse.

The Principal and School Council are responsible for developing strategies that embed an organisational culture of child safety at Knox Park Primary School. These strategies will give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child's safety, health development, education and wellbeing.

Knox Park Primary School affirms that everyone involved in the school has a role to play and is responsible for protecting children and upholding the duty of care that Knox Park Primary School owes to all its students.

All our staff, volunteers and any external providers of services to the School must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children or within the School premises.

Building and maintaining a child-safe culture

Knox Park Primary School will implement the strategies and initiatives provided by DET towards embedding an organisation culture of child safety, to the fullest extent of the school's capacity.

This will include allocating roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies, informing the school community about the strategies (including those people assigned with key roles in implementing them) and periodically reviewing and revising the strategies to ensure their effectiveness.

The school's plan for creating and maintaining a child safe culture will be made available on the school website [insert hyperlink] as part of the School's published policy suite.

Roles and responsibilities: the Child Safety Code of conduct

The Knox Park Primary School's Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the School's position on appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in relation to this policy.

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School leaders and managers will ensure that each staff member and all people specifically involved in school activities understands their role, responsibilities and the behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect.

All Knox Park Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors and any external service provider used by the school must comply, and must indicate their commitment to comply, with the School's Code of Conduct.

Recruitment, human resources practices and training

Knox Park Primary School will adhere strictly to DET recruitment and screening practices when recruiting and employing staff and contractors or when selecting volunteers. The School will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children.

Each job, or category of jobs, for school staff that involves child-connected work will include clear statements regarding child safety.

The School will implement the staff induction, education, professional development and training programs provided by DET through the PROTECT program and related initiatives. Knox Park PS recognises staff training and supervision as a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint: Child Safety Procedure

As part of this policy, Knox Park Primary School will have a Procedure in place which adheres to the reporting procedures and related processes set out by DET in the Guide entitled *Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools* and in particular, the *Four Critical Actions For Schools*.

Knox Park Primary School has clear expectations for staff, volunteers and the School community in general in regard to making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection.

The School's Procedure will set out the immediate action to be taken, including reporting concerns to the police, to DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency, as well as notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Under the Procedure, the school will take action to respond to a complaint and will inform appropriate authorities about the allegations without delay, including meeting any requirement relating to mandatory reporting.

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

The School will make and keep secure all records relating to the complaint in accordance with DET policies and legislative requirements.

The School will not require staff to make a judgement about the truth of any allegation.

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Where the Procedure assigns a role to a person, fulfilling that role and its responsibilities will not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

The school's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint will be made available on the school website as part of the School's published policy suite.

Risk reduction and management

The School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

Under the direction of the School Council, and in accordance with the DET PROTECT program, Knox Park Primary School will develop and implement risk management strategies regarding child safety in the school environment, operations and activities.

Knox Park Primary School will devise and implement an audit program of the school premises, its facilities and activities, to assess the School's compliance with the Child Safety Standards and to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse. The School will make appropriate records of the audit results including specific actions taken or to be taken to reduce risks.

The school's approach to Child Safety risk reduction and management will be made available on the school website <http://knoxparkps.vic.edu.au/> as part of the School's published policy suite.

The school will follow the procedures as outlined in the DET - *Identifying and Responding to all forms of Child Abuse in Victorian Schools* document.

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf

Promoting child empowerment and participation

Knox Park Primary School encourages child and parent/carer involvement and engagement to inform safe school operations and to help the school build the capability of children and parents/carers in understanding their rights and their responsibilities.

Under the guidance of the School Council, the School will develop strategies to deliver appropriate education to the school community as a whole about the child safety standards, including implementing the initiatives provided by DET to support child abuse awareness and prevention.

The school will promote the child safety Standards in ways which are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly to children.

Knox Park Primary School collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law (Privacy and Data Protection Act (Vic) 2014). The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the School Privacy Policy.

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed after an initial term of 12 months and subsequently every two years or following any reportable incident.

The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

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Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse includes—

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child’s use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff being: an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or a minister of religion.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
- School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations
- DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework
- School Privacy Policy (update expected in June 2016)

EVALUATION

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

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