



CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Definitions:

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.

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.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school 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.

Scope:

The child safe policy applies to all staff, volunteers, training teachers, contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people at VRS. It is relevant across the range of school forums including camps, excursions, community access both within and outside school hours.

Rationale:

Verney Road School (VRS) is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

VRS has zero tolerance for child abuse.

VRS is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Every student at our school has an intellectual disability and most endure co-morbidity. This is an added layer of vulnerability. Particular attention will also be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Every person involved in VRS 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.



Aims:

- To develop a clear understanding within the school community of what child abuse is.
- To ensure a culture of no tolerance of child abuse in the VRS community.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of emotional, psychological, sexual harm, or neglect of a child are followed up to appropriate authorities in a timely manner.

Implementation / Procedure:

The school will ensure compliance with the 7 Child Safety Standards.

The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns to ensure abuse does not occur or remain hidden.

The school will appoint a 'Child Safety Officer' who will be a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety. This will be held with the Social Worker position at VRS.

School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The school's Code of Conduct clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in professional actions to ensure Child Safety. All staff will be required to enact only acceptable behaviours as listed in the Code of Conduct.

The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children.

The school will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are 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.

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action will include notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of concerns and reporting concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

All Staff registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching will annually complete on-line training re Mandatory Reporting and maintain accreditation by passing the annual assessment.

Listening and believing children and young people is vital to a child safe environment at VRS.



Staff must take action immediately after witnessing an incident, receiving a disclosure or forming a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused. This action means reporting to a leader or social worker, who will support a report to the correct authority. (Child Protection or Child First) Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Ensuring risk management is a high priority including; inappropriate behavior is addressed and reported, recruitment of appropriate employees only, management of appropriate use of social media, ensuring safety of all unknown people on camps, excursions, community access and when contractors or maintenance workers are in the school environs.

It is the role of school staff members to listen and respond appropriately to a child's concerns. When a disclosure of abuse is made and/or there is a concern that a child has been abused or is at risk of being abused, you must inform the student that their confidentiality cannot be maintained. However confidentiality and privacy of the disclosure in the school environment is paramount.

Evaluation:

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

This policy was last ratified by School Council in 2016
Review Date 2019

School Council President.....

Principal