



Lilydale High School - Child Safe Policy

Rationale:

School Council acknowledges the importance of Ministerial Order 870 in relation to Child Safety. This school council policy reflects the Order, which is a companion document to this policy.

Council is committed to zero tolerance of child abuse. Council acknowledges that embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in schools.

Council acknowledges that student safety and wellbeing is a fundamental requirement underpinning a positive learning environment.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to reinforce 'Child Safety' as a school council priority for Lilydale High School; this policy provides the foundation for and commitment to child safety in the school.

As the school governing authority, council acknowledges its responsibility to inform the school community about this policy, and make the policy publicly available.

Guidelines

This policy reflects the Victorian Government Child Safe Standards that have arisen under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 - Ministerial Order 870, and advice provided by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

Child Safe policy applies to staff (including school employees, contractors and volunteers), parents and families, visitors and children.

Council acknowledges the Principal's role in monitoring adherence to council policy, and operational policies referred to below.

Standard 1

A culture of Child Safety

'Student Wellbeing' is a school priority in the current School Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018, as outlined in Standard 2.0 below.

School leadership structures support implementation of Child Safety strategies

School leadership structures provide umbrella responsibility for child safety at principal class level, student wellbeing at senior staff coordination level, and cascading responsibility through heads of sub-schools, year level coordinators and form teachers. Each member of staff has a duty of care to the student body.

A **Child Safety Coordinator** position has been created, this role has been allocated to an Assistant Principal. The contact details for the coordinator are made available to the school community.

All role and responsibility descriptions include a reference to individual responsibilities toward child safety.

Documented operational guidance is provided to staff, students and parents through related policies, including:

- (i) 'Teachers' Code of Conduct'.
- (ii) 'Student Code of Conduct'.
- (iii) 'Welfare and Discipline Policy' and 'Classroom Behaviour' Policy.
- (iv) 'Support for 'Teaching and Learning' guidelines and 'On-Site Supervision Policy'.
- (vi) 'Mandatory Reporting' and 'Student Referral Guidelines'.

(vii) Technology use guidelines and adherence agreements,

Child Safety is an element of the Workplace Risk Register document. (Refer Standard 6.0 below)

Children are informed about child abuse, the forms it can take, preventative strategies and how to report any occurrences. (See Standard 5.0 below)

The school community is kept informed about policies and practices through the intranet, school bulletins and student / parent / guardian access through the school website. Information regarding the roles allocated to staff toward implementation of child safety strategies is published.

A school policy communication strategy document has been prepared to ensure:

- (i) Policy documents are communicated in a timely fashion
- (ii) Policy documents are reviewed by council in accordance with a regular cycle, or if necessary, timely intervention, and revised as appropriate where applicable.

Council is advised by the VRQA document 'Informing the school community' as to the key messages to be communicated in relation to child safety. Aspects that relate specifically to staff, volunteers and contractors, families and visitors have been noted.

Council also notes the following key communication requirements:

In relation to Ministerial Order 870 Clause 7:

The school community must be informed of the strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school, the roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies allocated by the school governing authority, and how the strategies are being put into practice.

In relation to Ministerial Order Clause 8:

The school governing authority must inform the school community about the school's child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

Other

The Child Safety Code of Conduct (Standard 3) and the school's procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse (Standard 5) are made publicly available.

Documents developed for family support and information will be made readily available, including:

'Choosing a school: thinking about child safety' (VRQA)

'Safety at your child's school' (VRQA)

'Empowerment and participation of children' (Commission for Children and Young People)

'Safety of children with a disability' (Commission for Children and Young People)

Standard 2

Child Safety is paramount.

It is School Council policy that child safety is paramount, and that operational policies and procedures demonstrate zero tolerance of child abuse in the organisation. Children must be kept safe from harm.

Policy implementation will be evaluated at regular intervals for child safety effectiveness.

Child abuse is interpreted as defined under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006:

Child abuse includes-

(a) any act committed against a child involving

(i) a sexual offence; or

(ii) an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and

(b) the infliction, on a child, of-

(i) physical violence; or

(ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and

(c) serious neglect of a child.

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.

A key element of LHS values, goals and priorities is to promote and embed a culture of child safety.

The school 'Guiding Principles – School Values' include an awareness that students' *...feelings of security and sense of belonging are dependent on an environment where all members are ... respectful and courteous to each other. A pastoral concern of each individual student (is maintained from) initial enrolment through to post school experience.*

Our 'Values for Community' include 'Empathy', (which is demonstrated by) *.caring about the wellbeing of others by being kind and considerate.*

The School Strategic Plan (2015-2018) Environment goal is *to develop and maintain a positive, safe, caring and stimulating learning environment and a priority.*

Student Wellbeing is a School Strategic Plan priority: *..... to foster a safe and supportive environment and culture, one that promotes positive relationships and connectedness and supports the development of student's social and emotional skills so that they are well placed for success now and beyond school.*

Council expects that all school leadership and coordination role descriptions reflect the values, goals and priorities of the school, and promotion of council's zero tolerance to child abuse of any kind.

Council policy is that student safety and wellbeing are professional learning / training focus areas throughout the year, encompassing activities for council and school community (including volunteers), whole school staff level and smaller unit specialist activities. Education of students in relation to actions and responsibility is also a requirement. Visitors are to be made aware of the school's expectations in regard to child safety.

In practice, this entails support and encouragement to enable school staff, parents, and young people to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters, and support or assistance to children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Standard 3

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Current Codes of Conduct

The school staff and student codes of conduct provide clear guidance in relation to expectations, and address child safety. Operational policies reflect Departmental policy and professional requirements.

The codes incorporate the objective of promoting **child safety** in the school environment.

It is recognised that the fundamental responsibilities associated with ensuring child safety applies to all staff and volunteers associated with the school.

Council recognises that in the case of some staff working in the school, other professional or occupational codes of conduct may also apply.

3.1 Teachers' Code of Conduct

This school policy has in 2016 been updated and is entitled:

'Staff rights and responsibilities, and processes for addressing concerns or complaints'.

This policy notes:

The (staff) at the school have professional responsibilities to:

- *Exercise their duty of care towards the student, including protection from any form of abuse or bullying.*
- *Use a range of teaching strategies and provide a positive learning environment in which students are: treated equitably and justly.*

Related school policy – 'On site Supervision'

This policy is complementary to the expectations of staff when supervising students in class time (including any timetabled activity), where there is a direct staff duty of care toward the students of the class.

Rationale

The school will normally satisfy the duty of care for the on-site management of students outside normal timetabled class time by allocating responsibilities for supervision to different staff. The principal is responsible for making and administering such arrangements and teachers are responsible for carrying out their assigned supervisory duties in such a way that, as far as can be reasonably expected, protected from injury, including any form of abuse or act of bullying.

Guidelines

This on-site supervision requires not only protection from known hazards, but also protection from those that could arise (that is, those the teacher should reasonably have foreseen) and against which preventative measures could be taken.

...(on-site supervision) information is to be clearly provided to parents / guardians on a regular basis.

Acceptable and Unacceptable behaviour

Council acknowledges the VRQA Child Safety Standard 3 – Child Safety Code of Conduct guideline that incorporates the following:

Child Safe policy requires that all staff and volunteers understand that:

Physical contact or touching a child is not accepted

Favouritism or special relationships are not appropriate

The use of social media is cautioned

Out of hours contact with students should only be for professional purposes, and be in accordance with one's professional or volunteer responsibilities

The school discipline and welfare policies and procedures apply in all engagement with students

Changing rooms and changing clothes, toilet and bathing arrangements are governed by duty of care and professional responsibilities

Cultural matters must be responded to in a matter consistent with child safe policy.

Attention is drawn to precautions and careful management necessary in relation to:

Overnight camps, Counselling, First aid, Bus travel / excursions, and

Students with high support needs.

[Relevant parts of this behaviour statement need to be in staff role and responsibility documents (as appropriate), and the 'Staff rights and responsibilities doc,]

Council acknowledges the school has adopted as a guide the Victorian Institute of Teaching documents 'The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct' and the 'Code of Ethics'. These provide clear expectations of teachers in relation to 'the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and the community'.

In particular in relation to child safety, the guidance provided that is related to:

Principle 1.2 Teachers treat their students with courtesy and dignity.

Principle 1.4 Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with students

Principle 1.5 Teachers are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school, whether at school or not.

Principle 1.6 Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents (guardians and caregivers).

Principle 2.1 The personal conduct of a teacher will have an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole.

Council recognises the diversity of children enrolled at the school, including children with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and vulnerable children. In considering the diversity, children must always be protected from harm.

Council notes that 'A child safe organisation respects cultural differences and variations in child rearing practices due to a family's personal, cultural or religious beliefs. However a child safe organisation

recognises that these differences do not reduce a child's right to be safe or the organisations responsibility to protect the child from harm' (Commission for children and Young people 2015, A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation.)

3.2 Student Code of Conduct

The school Student Code of Conduct 'Student Rights' section includes the right::

To be treated in a fair manner

To be part of a safe and secure environment

Student Responsibilities include:

Ensuring that their behaviour does not endanger the safety of others or themselves

Further detail

Further detail regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for staff and volunteers is provided in the VRQA guideline 'Child Safety Standard 3 – Child safety code of conduct - acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Procedures in relation to reporting inappropriate conduct, allegations of abuse

Procedures are outlined in the documentation related to Standard 5

Standard 4

Staff selection and induction

Council acknowledges that *organisations must ensure that recruitment processes are in place to manage and reduce the risk of child abuse. In addition, processes must be in place to ensure that there are appropriate staff induction programs, staff professional development and staff supervision arrangements to ensure a child safe environment.*

Council acknowledges that Ministerial Order No. 870 Clause 10 includes the requirements to meet the minimum child safety standards in relation to staff appointments.

Council appointments are to be in accordance with the requirements and council acknowledges the role of the principal in ensuring the school procedures meet the requirements for all non council school appointments.

Reference: Ministerial Order 870 Clause 10:

1. *Subject to the requirements of the ETR Act , the school governing authority must ensure that the school implements practices for a child-safe environment in accordance with this clause.*
2. *Each job or category of jobs for school staff that involves child connected work must have a clear statement that sets out:*
 - a. *the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety ; and*
 - b. *the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety .*
3. *All applicants for jobs that involve child connected work for the school must be informed about the school's child safety practices (including the code of conduct).*
4. *In accordance with any applicable legal requirement or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child connected work :*
 - a. *Working with Children Check status, or similar check;*
 - b. *proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;*
 - c. *the person's history of work involving children; and*
 - d. *references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.*
5. *The school need not comply with the requirements in clause (4), above if it has already made reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the information set out in clauses (4)(a) to (4)(d), above about a particular individual within the previous 12 months.*
6. *The school must ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to:*
 - a. *the induction of new school staff into the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child connected work ; and*

- b. *monitoring and assessing a job occupant's continuing suitability for child connected work .*
7. *The school must implement practices that enable the school governing authority to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety .*

Further guidelines

Further guidelines are provided in the VRQA document Child Safety Standard 4 – Staff selection checklist.

Standard 5

Organisations must have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Council acknowledges that policies and procedures of an organisation for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse must enable individuals to take the appropriate course of action to protect the safety of students.

Ministerial Order 870 requirements in relation to procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse are outlined in Clause 11 as follows:

Council acknowledges that the school governing authority must have a clear procedure or set of procedures for responding to allegations of suspected child abuse in accordance with this requirement and other legal obligations. The guideline is adopted as follows:

1. *The school governing authority must ensure that the procedure is:*
 - a. *sensitive to the diversity characteristics of the school community;*
 - b. *made publicly available; and*
 - c. *accessible to children, school staff , and the wider community.*

 2. *The procedure must:*
 - a. *cover all forms of 'child abuse ' as defined in the ETR Act ;*
 - b. *apply to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, school staff , visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment ;*
 - c. *identify the positions of the person or people who are responsible for:*
 - i. *promptly managing the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse , and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously;*
 - ii. *responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse ;*
 - iii. *monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure; and*
 - iv. *managing an alternative procedure for responding to an allegation or disclosure if the person allocated responsibility under clause (3)(c)(i), above cannot perform his or her role;*
 - d. *include a statement that fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse;*
 - e. *clearly describe the actions the school will take to respond to an allegation of child abuse , including actions to:*
 - i. *inform appropriate authorities about the allegation (including but not limited to mandatory reporting);*
 - ii. *protect any child connected to the alleged child abuse until the allegation is resolved; and*
 - iii. *make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of child abuse and the school's response to it.*

 3. *The procedure must not:*
 - a. *prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school;*
 - b. *state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;*
 - c. *require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of child abuse ; or*
 - d. *prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse .*
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What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made.

Reference: Child Safe Toolkit - Resource 6 – Department of Health and Human Services

This resource kit guideline provides the steps now adopted by the school to assist individuals in dealing with allegations. Guidance is provided in relation to:

'If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you.'

'If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern', and

'Legal responsibilities'. The legal responsibilities section includes information about Mandatory Reporting, Failure to Disclose, and Failure to Protect; the details are provided in the school 'Mandatory Reporting' policy. Council has adopted the sample incident report proforma (Resource 6 – Department of Health and Human Services).

Standard 6

Child Safety Risk Management Strategies

Reference: Ministerial Order No. 870 Clause 12

Council acknowledges that organisations must have strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse. The school has prioritised the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of risk management strategies to ensure child safety in the organisation's environments, taking into account the nature of the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

It is school policy that a record of those risks is made, and the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls) specified.

It is acknowledged that ... *Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk.*

It is acknowledged that council must ensure that *appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of council and school staff about: individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse; child abuse risks in the school environment; and the school's current child safety standards.*

In developing the school risk analysis for council endorsement, the VRQA document 'Child Safety Standard 6: Child safety risk management strategies' has guided the school analysis processes.

Standard 7

Organisations must have strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Council acknowledges the intent of this Standard: *Organisations must ensure that children feel safe to report abuse and have processes in place to ensure that students are empowered to raise any child safety concerns. Organisations must support students to develop appropriate knowledge and skills so that children can identify and communicate when they don't feel safe.*

Council acknowledges the minimum child safety standard is for there to be strategies in place to promote child participation and empowerment in accordance with Ministerial Order 870 Clause 13:

1. *The school governing authority must develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:*
 - a. *standards of behaviour for students attending the school;*
 - b. *healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);*
 - c. *resilience; and*
 - d. *child abuse awareness and prevention.*
2. *The school governing authority must promote the child safety standards required by the Order in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.*

Inclusion Principles

Council acknowledges that in complying with the Child Safe standards, schools need to be mindful of the diversity of students and school communities and include the following principles as part of each Standard:

- *promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children*
- *promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds*
- *promoting the safety of children with a disability.*

Council notes in relation to Ministerial Order 870 Clause 6:

In implementing the minimum Child Safe standards in accordance with this Order, school governing authorities must:

- take account of 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; and*
- make reasonable efforts to accommodate the matters referred to in clause 6(a).*

Policy endorsed by School Council 12/09/2016

Policy to be reviewed/...../2018