

Policy Documentation

Child Safety Standards Policy

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Document Control

Ver	Date	Description	By (Person responsible for revision)
1.0	06/07/16	Document creation	T. Clarisse
1.1	20/07/16	Updates from staff feedback	T. Clarisse

References

- Department of Human Services - Child safe standards resources
<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards-resources>
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) - Child safe standards resources
<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafepages/resources.html>
- Erasmus Policy Child Protection (Mandatory Reporting) Policy & Procedures
- Erasmus Policy Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Erasmus Schedule Child Safety Communications Schedule

Table of Contents

1	OVERVIEW	4
1.1	ABOUT THIS POLICY	4
1.2	RELATED POLICIES	4
1.3	DEFINITIONS	4
2	OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY	4
3	OUR CHILDREN	5
4	OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS	5
4.1	TRAINING AND SUPERVISION	6
4.2	RECRUITMENT	6
4.3	FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL	7
5	CONTRACTORS	7
6	PRIVACY	7
7	LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES	7
8	RISK MANAGEMENT	8
9	ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS	8
10	REVIEW	9

1 OVERVIEW

1.1 About this policy

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) has established minimum standards in relation to child safety. This document shows how Erasmus Primary School complies with these standards and sets out the School's approach and administrative rules, which are observed as part of our daily operation.

1.2 Related policies

- Erasmus Policy Child Protection (Mandatory Reporting) Policy & Procedures
- Erasmus Policy Enrolment
- Erasmus Policy Student Wellbeing
- Erasmus Policy Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Erasmus Schedule Child Safety Communications Schedule.

1.3 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** –
 - 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
- **School staff** – an individual working in as school environment who is:
 - I. directly engaged or employed by the School;
 - II. a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
 - III. a minister of religion.

2 Our commitment to child safety

Erasmus Primary School is committed to child safety. We want children to be safe, and feel empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers:

- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children

- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously
- Our school is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, removing and reducing these risks
- Our school has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers
- Our school is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000. Alternatively, inform the school principal or delegate.

3 Our children

Erasmus Primary School is committed to empowering children to be vital and active participants in the school. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

4 Our staff and volunteers

We guide our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children within our school. All staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as

well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

4.1 Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This is achieved via staff inductions and periodical education sessions at staff meetings.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to:

- develop their skills to protect children from abuse
- promote the cultural safety of all children, including Aboriginal
- the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds and
- the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to our code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

4.2 Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have both ethical and legislative obligations.

As an equal opportunity employer, we are nondiscriminatory towards applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the Working with Children Check website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and

are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affects our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

4.3 Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our *Critical Incident report*, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide appropriate updates to children and families on progress and any actions the school takes.

5 Contractors

Contractors coming into the school will be required to either have a valid Working With Children check or be accompanied by an employee whilst on site. Where at all possible, contractors will be engaged outside of school hours.

6 Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure all personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

7 Legislative responsibilities

Our school takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- Failure to protect: People of authority in our school will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

8 Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see Legislative Responsibilities - Failure to Protect, above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media). Our risk assessment matrix is reviewed by staff at the start of each year. A review log is maintained for audit purposes.

9 Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has procedures in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above). If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

See Erasmus Policy Child Protection (Mandatory Reporting) document for further information and procedures.

10 Review

This policy will be reviewed by December every two years or following significant incidents if they occur and will be amended or updated to take account of any changes or introductions of new policies or new standards.

We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Date policy ratified by Erasmus Primary School Board of Governors: TBA

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