

Policy Documentation

Child Safe Standards Policy

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References

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- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) – Child safe standards resources. Available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/chilsafe/Pages/resources.aspx [Accessed 20 March 2018].

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1 Overview

1.1 About this policy

Erasmus Primary School is committed to creating and maintaining a school in which all children are safe from harm. Erasmus Primary School has a zero tolerance of child abuse.

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 Aims of this policy

- To protect students in our care from abuse.
- To create and maintain a culture of child protection within the school and its community.
- To comply with the Child Safe Standards as set out in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015*:
 - Standard 1 – Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
 - Standard 2 – A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
 - Standard 3 – A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
 - Standard 4 – Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
 - Standard 5 – Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
 - Standard 6 – Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
 - Standard 7 – Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.
- To comply with the specific requirements as set out in Ministerial Order 870.

1.3 Related policies

- Erasmus Child Protection (Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- Erasmus Policy: Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Erasmus Policy: Enrolment
- Erasmus Policy: Student Wellbeing
- Erasmus School Calendar regarding child safety communications

1.4 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.
- ‘Child’ is defined in Ministerial Order 870 as a child enrolled as a student at the school.
- ‘Child connected work’ means work authorised by or on behalf of the governing board and performed by an adult in the school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
- ‘The school environment’ means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the governing board for use by a child during or outside school hours, including
 - a) a campus of the school
 - b) online school environments; and
 - c) other location 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’ means an individual working in a school environment who is
 - a) directly engaged or employed by the school;
 - b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person as an intermediary); or
 - c) a minister of religion.

2 Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for authorising this policy, for overseeing its implementation and for managing the risk of child abuse. The Principal is responsible for keeping the Board abreast of any child safety related concerns, with any changes to child safe-related policies communicated and circulated to the Board for approval.

Risk treatment and monitoring are scrutinised by the School's OH&S committee, where the Chair of the Board is also a member, and resolutions are handled in conjunction with the Principal.

The Board is informed of any legislative and regularity changes by the Principal. The Principal is kept well informed of requirements and obligations via Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) communication; an organisation that supports and represents independent schools and their students in Victoria.

The Principal is responsible for the culture of the school in which this policy is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice. Communication to the school community, inclusive of parents, staff and children, is achieved via the school newsletter, assemblies and inductions for pledge parents and volunteers.

The Principal is also responsible for ensuring appropriate arrangements for child safety (including, without limitation, clear and comprehensive policies, procedures, accountability mechanisms and communication strategies) are implemented, monitored and reviewed within the school:

- The School community is communicated with at the start of each year via the newsletter.
- The subject of child safety is raised and discussed during school assembly with the children early each term.
- Our induction program includes:
 - our *Child Safe Code of Conduct* – all staff, inclusive of volunteers, parent helpers and extra-curricular personnel read and sign our *Child Safe Code of Conduct*
 - the Department of Education and Training's *Four Critical Actions for Schools*
 - our *Child Safe Standards Policy*.
- Erasmus Primary School informs job applicants of our *Child Safe Standards Policy* and includes child safety related questions when obtaining references for any new staff.
- Erasmus Primary School insists on **all** volunteers, parent helpers and regular contractors to hold a Working With Children Check – no exceptions.
- An appropriate school staff member will shadow ad-hoc visitors around the site.
- Erasmus Primary School insists on everyone signing in and out whilst on site.

Erasmus Primary School's Principal is the nominated Child Safety Officer. The Child Safety Officer is responsible for implementing the school's *Child Safe Standards Policy* and the mandated requirements of Ministerial Order 870. Staff may seek advice from the Child Safety Officer if they have concerns about child safety matters and when considering whether to make

a report about a child in need of protection. Where unable to perform his/her duties, the Child Safety Officer shall delegate responsibility to a senior manager (Head of Administration or Head of Learning).

All staff, contractors and volunteers have a duty of care to protect children from harm and a responsibility to comply with the school's *Child Safe Standards Policy* and procedures. Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in this policy does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

3 Communication of the policy

Erasmus Primary School will make regular and frequent public statements to demonstrate its commitment to child safety and to raise an awareness of the school community's collective responsibility to ensure all children are safe from harm.

This policy will be made publicly available on the school's website and at reception.

The school will put in place arrangements to ensure that the school community (including applicants for jobs) is informed of the school's *Child Safe Standards Policy*, procedures and allocated roles and responsibilities.

4 Implementation of the policy

Each Standard will be implemented by Erasmus Primary School as follows.

4.1 Standard 1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

Erasmus Primary School will:

- communicate a zero tolerance of child abuse to the school community by keeping the school community, including personnel, informed of our commitment to providing a child safe environment
- report on child safety in the Annual Report
- ensure staff awareness of allocated roles and responsibilities
- carry out pre-employment reference checks, criminal history checks, Working With Children Checks and confirm VIT registration for new staff
- induct all new staff in child safety and the code of conduct
- schedule discussion about child safety at staff and senior management meetings (as per school calendar)
- assign time in the school calendar to allow for professional development related to child safety and staff training once a year
- foster a culture of openness with approachable and supportive managers, to encourage reporting of inappropriate behaviour

- make children aware of how to detect and report inappropriate behaviour through assemblies and class discussions
- nominate contact persons that children can approach in relation to child safety
- have in place child safety reporting procedures
- provide appropriate counselling and other resources to support children subjected to child abuse
- review child safety practices each year during our annual staff meeting dedicated to the Child Safe Standards.

4.2 Standard 2. Our statement of commitment to child safety

Erasmus Primary School is committed to child safety. We want children to be safe, and feel empowered in all school environments (physical or online). 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, and 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. The School recognises that there are children with increased vulnerability to maltreatment and is committed to their care and protection.
- 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.

4.3 Standard 3. Child Safe Code of Conduct

Erasmus Primary School has devised a *Child Safe Code of Conduct* for all personnel.

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.

4.4 Standard 4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse

4.4.1 Training and supervision

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

- All staff, including Board members, are required to complete the Department of Education and Training's eLearning module (*Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations*) in Term 1 of each school year.
- All Board members are required to attend a *Commission for Children and Young People* session on the Child Safe Standards.

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, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment 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.

4.4.2 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 non-discriminatory 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. Please see the [Working With Children Check](#) website 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.

4.4.3 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.

4.4.4 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 onsite. Where at all possible, contractors will be engaged outside of school hours.

4.5 Standard 5. Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Erasmus Primary School has a *Child Protection (Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures* document which outlines the school's response to any suspected child abuse. Staff are trained annually during our dedicated child safety staff meeting to follow this document, and it is available on the school website.

4.6 Standard 6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (refer to 6. Legislative Responsibilities – Failure to protect). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Erasmus Primary School proactively manages 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 and our OH&S committee once a year. A review log is maintained for audit purposes.

Erasmus Primary School will:

- monitor sick bay attendances and student absences so that specific incidences or trends of concern can be discussed and parents contacted
- ask for parent permission through an ongoing permission form to use photographs or video of students in public forums (e.g. social media, school website)
- not attribute any identifier to images or videos of a student (e.g. not use names in captions)
- keep photos and videos of students on a secure network
- have all personnel sign in/out whilst on site and wearing either a name tag or lanyard to identify authorised personnel
- ensure provision for two yard-duty staff to be rostered on each recess and lunch
- ensure planned excursions and camps adhere to the Child Safe Standards
- keep a risk register as part of OH&S requirements
- review risks after any incidences, and make adjustments as necessary
- ensure school grounds are safe for children, e.g. keeping external doors and gates locked, and keeping exit areas clear from obstructions.

4.7 Standard 7. Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

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.

5 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.

6 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.

7 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.

Refer to the *Child Protection (Mandatory Reporting) Policy & Procedures* document for further information and procedures.

8 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: 5/8/2016

End of document