Policy Documentation

Child Safe Standards Policy

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Document Control

Ver	Dat7e	Description	By (Person responsible for revision)
1.0	06/07/16	Document creation	T. Clarisse
01.01	20/07/16	Updates from staff feedback	T. Clarisse
01.02	19/03/18	Update to meet Ministerial Order 870	J. Hoadley
01.03	29/10/18	Update policy according to VRQA Audit additional requirements October 2018	T. Clarisse
	21/11/18	Updates to meet VRQA's requirements (Nov 18)	T. Clarisse
01.04	25/05/22	Updates to meet Ministerial Order 1359	T. Clarisse
01.05	18/10/23	VRQA recommendation to remove references to: • Ministerial Order 870 • Department of Education and Training • Department of Health and Human Services	T. Clarisse
01.06	01/03/24	VRQA recommendation to: • remove all references to Ministerial Order 870 & • inc. processes for maintaining & disposing of records re CSS	T. Clarisse

References

- Victorian Department of Education. Child safe standards resources. Available at www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx [Accessed 22 March 2018].

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

- Ministerial Order 1359, together with VRQA checklist (2022 CSS Action list non gov schools).

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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 Ministerial Order 1359, and the Victorian legislation that creates the Standards - the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic):
    o   Standard 1: Culturally Safe Environments
    o   Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in leadership, governance and culture
    o   Standard 3: Child and student empowerment
    o   Standard 4: Family engagement
    o   Standard 5: Diversity and Equity
    o   Standard 6: Suitable staff and volunteers
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    o   Standard 8: Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness
    o   Standard 9: Child safety in physical and online environments
    o   Standard 10: Review of child safety practices
    o   Standard 11: Implementation of child safe practices
- To comply with the specific requirements as set out in Ministerial Order 1359.

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 Policy: Recruitment

- 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 1359 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 regulatory changes by the Principal. The Principal is kept well informed of requirements and obligations via Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) communications; 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 Family Participation 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'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 1359. 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.

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 is implemented by Erasmus Primary School as follows. **Appendix A – Erasmus Process and Procedures** demonstrates the steps taken to meet our Child Safety requirements.

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

4.1   Standard 1. Culturally Safe Environments

Erasmus Primary School is committed to empowering all 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.

Examples of actions to support cultural safety

At Erasmus, we:
- Begin events and assemblies with a Welcome to, or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item, as an opportunity to pause, reflect or discuss.
- Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school grounds.
- Celebrate the local Aboriginal community in communications with students, staff, volunteers and families via school newsletters, school assemblies, parent information nights.
- Build schoolwide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes.

- Express zero tolerance of racism our your statement of commitment to child safety included in your Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and other documents.
- Address racism from students, staff, volunteers or visitors directly. We ensure racist speech or actions are always dealt with; the culture of the school works to prevent incidents from occurring.
- Work with the local Aboriginal community to build staff, volunteer and student knowledge and respect for Aboriginal culture and to promote cultural inclusion via our Aboriginal community incursions.
- Include Aboriginal history and culture in professional learning for staff and in curriculum planning for students.
- Visit an Aboriginal cultural learning centre, such as
  - Koorie Heritage Trust (Melbourne)
  - Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Melbourne).

4.2   Standard 2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in leadership, governance and culture

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.

- Our enrolment, wellbeing and child safety student-related documents are stored safely in our lockable filing system and Secured server folders, and is treated with security in mind by staff members who have access.

- Processes are in place to meet Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards, such as our annual archive procedure into our secure storage. This covers paper records. Digital records are kept indefinitely:

  o Paper archival is performed at end of year and tracked accordingly.

  o Digital records remain on the User-authenticated, security-restricted folders on the school server indefinitely and backed up as part of our server backup cycle.

  o Child Safe specific records are kept indefinitely either on our server or hard copy securely in the principal's office.

  o See Archiving procedures : *Erasmus Archives.pdf and Maintenance and Disposal of Records Procedure v1.0.*

Examples of actions to embed child safety and wellbeing in leadership, governance and culture

At Erasmus, we:
- Promote the school's child safety policies at assemblies, meetings, welcome packs, newsletters and other regular communications, promoting the school's commitment to child safety.

- Create child-friendly versions of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct with student input and make these versions publicly available.

- Display your commitment to child safety prominently at reception and around the school grounds.

- Communicate and demonstrate at assemblies and in classrooms, when appropriate, that mistreatment of students and racism is not tolerated in any way and that students who speak out are listened to and taken seriously.

- Promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

- Our OHS Committee is assigned responsibility to review and update the Child Safety Risk Register annually.

- During assemblies where Child Safety is discussed, we ask students what matters to them, what makes them feel safe and whether the school's child safety strategies are meeting their needs.

- Seek input from staff, volunteers, families and the school community. Ask what the school does well, and what can be improved.

- Review child safety practices and any emerging risks periodically, or after an incident.

- Provide regular reports to the school council or governing authority on child safety improvements.

- Support students, families, staff and volunteers to safely disclose any child safety concerns or complaints. Report back to complainants about actions taken as a result.

- Control access to records of complaints to ensure only appropriate people see details.

- Ensure the school uses the relevant Public Record Office Victoria Retention and Disposal Authorities (RDA), including the RDA for Records of Organisational Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Incidents and Allegations to retain records for the correct period.

4.3   Standard 3: Child and student 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, strengthening their confidence and engagement.

As part of our curriculum related documents, we support student empowerment by:

- educating students about truths and ethic, including safety, information, and participation.

- recognising the importance of friendships, encouraging peer support to help fellow students feel safe and be less isolated.

- During dedicated Child Safety staff meetings, staff and volunteers are reminded to be vigilant to signs of harm and ways to facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.

Examples of actions to support the child and student empowerment culture

At Erasmus, we:
- Provide age appropriate and accessible information to students such as information about the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct, and how the adults in the school should behave.
- Inform students, during our start of term assemblies and within classrooms, of how to:
    - live and grow up healthy
    - have a say about decisions affecting them
    - get information that is important to them

- be safe and not harmed by anyone (child-to-child interactions, as well as adult-to-child interactions).
    - what to do when they feel unsafe
    - phrases they can use to raise an objection
    - pathways for raising safety concerns, and
    - online safety behaviours.
- Work to build trust by being open and transparent about information sharing and keep the child and family informed each time their information is shared if it is appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so.
- Seek and consider the views of the child (or the relevant family members) about sharing their confidential information if it is appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so
- Provide information through the curriculum via relevant subject areas to promote:
    - Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships
    - School-wide Positive Behaviour
    - Safe schools.
- Display visually engaging and easy-to-read posters promoting student voice and agency.
- Invite students, via our Student Council, to provide feedback on school-wide decisions and take their views into account in school decision-making.
- Involve students in consultation processes and inform them of their impact on decision-making.
- Demonstrate that the school takes students seriously by acting on their concerns, noting that what might seem unimportant to an adult may be important to a young person.
- Highlight student views in your school community via the school newsletter, including students' quotes where appropriate.
- Create opportunities for all student voices by being aware of discriminatory barriers and any overreliance on the input of student leaders. This is achieved via our Celebration events and assemblies.
- Provide a buddying program for new students transitioning to the school mid-year or outside of the regular transition timeline.
- Support all students to identify trusted adults and friends they can talk to about a concern at school, at home or in the community.
- Deliver age-appropriate curriculum content about respectful relationships.
- Provide training to staff and volunteers to be attuned to signs of harm and risk factors in students during our annual Child Safe dedicated staff meeting Term 1:
    - Remind staff and volunteers to recognise that students might communicate in different ways, including through verbal and non-verbal cues, play, body language, facial expressions, drawings or behaviours.
- Follow through on your commitments – show students that the leadership team and staff are trustworthy and take their worries or concerns seriously.

4.4 Standard 4: Family engagement

At each Start of Year parent meeting, followed by an article in our subsequent newsletter edition and holding Open assemblies when speaking to children on this subject, we aim to support and encourage family engagement with respect to child safety and wellbeing. Both the parent meeting and newsletter article is aimed at encouraging:

- families are encouraged to participate in decisions related to child safety and wellbeing practices and policies

- open and honest communication between school, families and the school community about the school's approach to child safety and accessible, relevant information

- families and the community to keep informed about the operations and governance of the school relating to child safety and wellbeing.

Examples of actions to support family engagement

At Erasmus, we:
- Nominate a contact person for new enrolments and provide their details in induction materials and transition packs.
- Provide new enrolments with family welcome packs that include information about child safety, the school's complaints processes and how to raise concerns.
- Conduct an annual school fair to welcome families and the broader community.
- Create a welcoming environment at school reception so community members and families feel respected, included and safe to come onto school grounds.
- Ask parents and carers about their children. This can be in formal settings like parent/teacher interviews, or during chance meetings at pick-up and drop-off.
- Regularly engage with parents, carers and students and discuss the needs of students through parent/teacher interviews.
- Discuss how your school approaches child safety topics at parents and carers.
- Provide frequent opportunities for parents and carers to engage with staff to discuss their children's experiences at school.
- Organise interpreters and translations to engage families from non-English speaking backgrounds in conversations about the school's child safety strategies and more.
- Remind the school community about the shared roles of parents, carers and school staff in creating a positive environment for learning by promoting the respectful behaviours in the school community.
- Communicate with and appropriately involve families at all stages of the process if a concern raised or complaint is made.
- Maintain our newsletters and communications as appropriately diverse of family profiles and reflect the characteristics of your school community.
- Encourage families to participate in our Family Participation Program, catering for the diverse backgrounds existing at school.

- Display the Four Critical Actions poster (DoET - Child Safety - Four Critical Actions copy.pdf) in shared areas that are accessible to parents and the community.
- Provide links to the school's child safety policies in the school's social media posts, newsletters and staff circulars.
- Check that the students, school staff, and members of the school community know who to contact if they have a concern about child safety. Keep this information up to date and accessible, and review it regularly.
- Translate child safety information in to multiple languages to reflect your school community.
- Make child safety a standing item at the school governing authority meetings.
- Report on the outcomes of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and students to show transparency and accountability.
- Promote Resilience and Respectful Relationships education to families.
- Acknowledge the important role that families and communities play in monitoring children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to disclose concerns.
- Communicate with and appropriately involve families at all stages of the process if a concern or complaint is raised.

4.5   Standard 5: Diversity and Equity

Erasmus Primary School upholds equity and respects diverse needs. Our website, together with our policies and procedures, accessible to all, contains information to assist in:
- understanding the diverse circumstance of children and students, providing support and responding to vulnerable children.
- ensures all members of our school community have access to information, support and complaints processes that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- In doing this, we are sensitive to those with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, and gender diversity, inclusive of the needs of Aboriginal students.

Examples of actions to support diversity and equity

At Erasmus, we:
- Recognise the range of diverse student and family attributes:
  o cultural safety for all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including the needs of students from diverse religious and cultural communities
  o the needs of students with disability
  o the impact of prior trauma
  o gender differences
  o challenges for students who are in foster care, out of home care, living away from home or international students

- socio-economic factors (experiencing family homelessness, insecure employment or accommodation, individual or family contact with the justice system, poverty, addiction, low educational attainment, remote or regional isolation).
- Normalise asking for and using people's preferred names for students.
- Use contemporary, culturally sensitive and inclusive examples when discussing families, relationships or professions and vocations.
- Communicate that discrimination and bullying are not tolerated
- Let students know they can raise concerns or report incidents that occurred at school and outside the school.
- Check in with vulnerable students and their families to confirm their needs are being met. This can occur at pick-up or drop-off, at parent teacher interviews or through informal discussions.
- Validate students' feelings. Students may feel that they have not been listened to or believed in the past.
- Discuss how students feel about discussing their personal circumstances and respect their wishes, unless believed to lessen or prevent a serious threat to an individual's life, health, safety or welfare.
- Take a holistic approach when responding to family violence.
- Respond to family violence in a way that is accessible, culturally responsive, safe, child-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory.
- Ensure school environments are welcoming and inclusive.
  - Displaying of flags representing different cultures within the school community during our Harmony Day assembly
  - decorate the school with artistic expressions from students and young people.
- Seek out expert advice as needed to support inclusion, such as an occupational therapist, speech pathologist, provision planning.
- Use images of students with diverse characteristics in school publications to reflect the school community.

4.6   Standard 6: Suitable staff and volunteers

4.6.1   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'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 Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

4.6.2   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 any work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working With Children (WWC) Check and to provide evidence of this. Please see the Working With Children Check website for further information. This is included as part of a teacher's VIT registration.

WWC and VIT details are copied and filed under an employee's personnel file, together with a copy of any non-teaching qualifications. The WWC details are also kept on our Staff database for follow up and renewal purposes.

All successful job applicants go through our induction process and are provided a copy of the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct and links to child safety resources.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks when deemed necessary, 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.

4.6.3 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.

All employee/volunteer-created documentation is kept secure and confidential at all times and handed over to the Child Safety Officer for secure safe-keeping. Refer Erasmus Policy Child Protection -Mandatory Reporting- Policy & Procedures.

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.

4.6.4 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.

Examples of actions to engage suitable staff and volunteers

At Erasmus, we:
- Include selection criteria relevant to the role when advertising for a position, such as:
  o experience working with children, or particular groups of children, including children with a disability or multiculturalism
  o engaging with families
  o child safety experience
  o cultural safety in their work.
- Think carefully about who will be on the interview panel and ensure panel members have the right skills, experience and information to perform their role.
- Develop questions about child safety in job interviews.
- Seek referees for both staff and volunteers as appropriate, including their last employer, and overseas referees if they've worked overseas.
- Ask referees about the person's character and experience in working directly with children and young people.
- Communicate regularly with staff and volunteers about the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct at staff meetings, in newsletters and staff updates.

- Provide refresher child safe training for staff and volunteers.
- Include child safety and wellbeing as a regular agenda item for staff meetings at all levels of the organisation.
- Include child safety and wellbeing goals in staff professional development plans.
- Provide induction process for all new employees
- Train all staff and volunteers as appropriate.

4.7   Standard 7: Complaints processes

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.

Examples of actions for child-focused complaints processes

At Erasmus, we:
- Encourage students to raise concerns with a trusted adult.
- Encourage student discussions about what would help them speak up when they have concerns during our CSS focussed assemblies.
- Ensure that students, families, staff and volunteers have access to and understand the complaints process. This is also available on our website and in the Parents' handbook.
- Receive complaints whole-heartedly, taking care to validate students' experiences, as seemingly small issues to an adult might not be to a child.
- Are committed to making improvements following a complaint to address the source of the problem and follow through on the commitment.
- Offer support services to complainants as appropriate.

- Display the PROTECT Four Critical Actions PDF poster in pertinent areas around the school.
- Ensure school leaders have:
  - o a detailed understanding of the complaints process
  - o investigative or interviewing skills, or authorisation to engage people with these skills
  - o high levels of rapport and engagement with students
  - o ability to respond to students with diverse needs
  - o willingness to work with police and child protection authorities
  - o information on support services for people affected by complaints.
- Ensure staff and volunteers understand the complaints policy, the Four Critical Actions, failure to report and failure to protect offences, grooming, child abuse and family violence, mandatory reporting and their roles in the process.
- Empower all staff and volunteers to act on concerns about behaviour and report their concerns, complaints or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct to school leadership.

4.8   Standard 8: Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Training and information on child safety is appropriately provided for the school community, including guidance on:

- communicating 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
- the school's procedures for responding to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse
- in recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children, students, or adults (including family violence)
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- building culturally safe environments
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in physical and online environments without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities
- report on child safety in the Annual Report
- ensure staff awareness of allocated roles and responsibilities
- carry out pre-employment reference checks, Working With Children Checks and confirm VIT registration for new staff
- induct all new staff in child safety and our code of conduct

- schedule discussion about child safety at staff and senior management meetings (as per school calendar), inclusive of Board members
- 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.

Examples of actions to equip staff and volunteers on Child safety knowledge, skills & awareness

At Erasmus, we:

- Provide an induction for new staff, volunteers and new school council members on child safety
- Deliver regular child safety briefings for all staff, through staff meetings, newsletters, parent briefings.
- Require all staff with Mandatory Reporting obligations to refresh their Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations (Mandatory Reporting) training at least once a year.
- Inform staff and volunteers (as appropriate) of their responsibilities around Child safety.
- Remind staff regularly that they need to be alert for signs of harm and risk factors and aware of physical and online risks to child safety. See Appendix B – Maltreatment Indicators.
- Provide staff and relevant volunteers with up-to-date contact details for local support services for students and families.
- Consider staff needs when designing training, such as diverse backgrounds and cultures, disabilities etc
- Develop and communicate our Child Safe Code of Conduct, Wellbeing Policy, and Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy.
- Include child safety improvement and training in school planning.
- Keep a record of all staff and volunteers who complete child safety training to ensure all are appropriately trained and training is refreshed as required.

4.9   Standard 9: Child safety in physical and online environments

Our policies regarding student conduct online, including online safety, complement our Child Safety & Wellbeing policies and practices and the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, complimented by our student conduct online and online safety, enable staff and volunteers to identify and mitigate risks in both physical and online school environments without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities

Our vigilance and practices extend to include extra-curricular third party providers, ensuring the safety of all students at all times.

Examples of actions to support child safety in physical and online environments

At Erasmus, we:
- Supervise students properly in all settings, including the playground, excursions and camps.
- Give particular attention to the safety, diverse needs and vulnerabilities of students in each activity or setting. Consider whether there are any barriers that might prevent students from raising concerns.
- Inform students and their families about appropriate use of the school's technology, safety tools and how to seek help and report concerns including online related concerns.
- Keep up to date with current online safety issues and expert information from specialist government and non-government bodies including the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, and eSmart Schools.
- Communicate to staff, volunteers and students where appropriate, of identified risks and risk management strategies.
- Organise professional learning to discuss risk and harm prevention and hazard awareness with staff, volunteers and school council members.
- Review incidents against policies and procedures, including seeking student feedback on how incidents were handled and how safe they felt, and make improvements as needed.
- Facilitate age-appropriate ways to use the internet and social media for students utilising our Rights and Respectful Relationships and policy
- Inform students about online safety risks via our Student Internet Use and Code of Conduct policies.
- Use filtering software on school-based devices.
- Encourage parents to use parental controls on personal devices.
- Monitor online activity and respond to breaches of the online policies and procedures with appropriate consequences.

- Require school staff to undertake information security training to reduce the risk of online phishing or malware attacks.
- Ask contractors to provide their Working with Children Clearance upon entry to the school.
- Provide contractors with a copy of the Child Safety Code of Conduct and Child Safety Policy.

4.10 Standard 10: Review of child safety practices

Child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and practices are reviewed and evaluated each year as part of our assemblies, staff meetings and OHS Committee instigated Risk matrix reviews in consultation with students, families, staff and the Board.

There are also planned reviews of these policies and practices after any significant child safety incident, where improvements are put in place, if applicable.

We have a system and process, accessed by the Principal, to record and analyse all complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to identify causes and failures, and to inform continuous improvement. Any relevant outcomes of policy and process reviews are shared with the governing body, staff, volunteers, the school community, families and students.

Examples of actions to support the review of child safety practices

At Erasmus, we:
- Develop a register of existing child safe standard policies, noting the date the policy was approved, and schedule a review date every 2 years - see 2022_CSS_Action_list_non_gov_schools.docx, under column 'My School's Actions.
- Engage our OHS committee to monitor and manage child safety risks using a risk register.
- Use complaints and incidents as a learning opportunity to inform continuous improvement.
- Communicate Child Safety related topics to students in age-appropriate ways.
- Use surveys, focus groups and discussions to review the accessibility and level of awareness of child-safe policies and procedures by students, families, staff and volunteers.

4.11 Standard 11: Implementation of child safe practices

In order to foster an attitude of continuous improvement regarding Child Safe policies, procedures and practices, the school:
- regularly reviews and evaluates policies and strategies, ensuring they are adequate, up-to-date and effective, fully implemented and followed by everyone; including after any significant child safety incident
- analyses child safety incident data,

- shares review findings with the school community,

understanding that there are tangible benefits of regularly reviewing child safety practices; being a child-safe organisation requires ongoing effort and put child safety and wellbeing at the centre of the school's activities.

<u>Examples of actions for implementing child safety policies and procedures</u>

At Erasmus, we:
- Publish our child safety policies on the school website and hard copy form the school office.
- Integrate child safety into induction processes, ongoing education, training and supervision for all staff and volunteers.
- Make available copies of our child safety policies in welcome packs and transition resources.
- Display easy-to-read posters in various locations around the school.
- Highlight child safety in recruitment processes.
- Have child-focused complaints policies and procedures.
- Schedule child safety briefings at information evenings and orientation days.
- Include a regular child safety item in newsletters to families.
- Seek feedback on policies and procedures from the school community, staff, families, and students.
- Be aware of emerging legislation, research and resources in child safety and wellbeing and ensure that policies and procedures are informed by any new developments.
- Nominate child safety champions to support school leaders in effectively implementing and monitoring the child safe policies and practices.
- Maintain high visibility of child safety and wellbeing. Discuss child safety at staff and parent meetings, and school assemblies. Display posters, write articles newsletters and staff bulletins on child safety topics.
- Train staff and volunteers on school policies and their responsibilities. Create regular opportunities to discuss and reinforce understandings.
- Monitor how staff and volunteers contribute to child safety through supervision, discussions, staff meetings and surveys.

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 is reviewed from time to time 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: 15/ 12 /2022

Appendix A – Erasmus Process and Procedures

	Process / Procedure	Responsible	When
1	Review child safety practices each year during our annual staff meeting dedicated to the Child Safe Standards (CSS). Revisit the CSS Policy *(Erasmus Policy Child Safe Standards)* And Share any Policy improvement outcomes	Principal	Mid T1
2	Share CSS specific information during the Start of Year Parent meetings, where parents and families are reminded about child safety, encouraged to communicate and participate in making our school child safe conscious. Share any Policy improvement outcomes	Principal	Start of T1
3	Our risk assessment matrix is reviewed by staff once a year. A review log is maintained for audit purposes.	Principal	Mid T1
4	The Induction process is executed for all Volunteers and all staff (contracted, permanent & casual).	Kitchen Manager & OHS Officer (EB)	Mid T1 (refresher) & As needed (new staff)
5	Annually, publish CSS details in our newsletter to the school community.	Principal / Newsletter Editor	Mid T1
6	Our risk assessment matrix is reviewed by our OH&S committee once a year. A review log is maintained for audit purposes.	Chair (OH&S Committee Member)	T2
7	Hold CSS specific OPEN assemblies where students are reminded about being safe, encouraged to communicate issues/concerns and general appropriate behaviour.	Principal	Early T1 & T3
8	Monitor sick bay attendances and student absences so that specific incidences or trends of concern can be discussed and parents contacted	Primary First Aid Officer	Monthly or as required
9	Board members receive appropriate guidance and training about: • their obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse • child safety and wellbeing risks in the school	Principal	Yearly

	environment *(from OHS Committee in T2)* • the child safety policies, procedures and practices of the school Any policy improvement outcomes are Shared.		
10	All staff & Board members are required to complete the Department of Education's eLearning module (Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations) in Term 1 of each school year MARAM Online Learning System https://elearn.childlink.com.au/login/index.php	Principal	T1
11	Require school staff to undertake information security training to reduce the risk of online phishing or malware attacks. (https://www.interrelate.org.au/ (https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/trusted-providers/find-providers)	Principal	T2
12	Check that policies of 3rd parties ensure the safety of students (after school activity providers, Coaches if left with classes)	OHS Officer (EB)	As needed

Appendix B – Maltreatment Indicators

General indicators
- significant family stress or violence
- limited communication skills
- different family or cultural values from mainstream societal values
- being physically and/or emotionally less able to protect themselves
- being unable to understand inappropriate sexual behaviour or maltreatment risk actors
- the fact they may be more compliant or adult centred.

Sexual indicators
- disclosure of involvement in sexual activity directly to an adult, indirectly to a friend or in a disguised way; e.g. 'I know a person who......'
- bloodstained underwear
- pregnancy or fear of pregnancy
- signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital area

Neglect indicators
- abandonment
- poor hygiene
- lack of adequate or suitable clothing
- inadequate nutrition

Physical indicators
- Bruises
- Burns
- hair missing in tufts
- lacerations and abrasions (especially to the eyes, lips, gums and mouth)

Emotional indicators
- Depression
- eating disorders (anorexia or bulimia)
- lethargy or fatigue
- symptoms of stress

End of document