



## Child Safe Policy

### **Rationale:**

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
- responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

The parents and staff of Sandringham East Primary School consider the safety of students to be paramount. The school community supports a child safety policy that:

- Minimises the risks to students by embedding a culture of no tolerance for child abuse
- Operates within the framework of the law and guidance from the Department of Education and Training and in particular Ministerial Order 870 ( Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 2016 ) from the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

### **The school aims to :**

- embed an organisational culture of child safety through effective leadership arrangements with a zero tolerance for child abuse
- implement this child safe policy emphasising our commitment to child safety
- follow our a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children as seen in the Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy
- screen, supervise, train and use human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- have systems to protect children from abuse, taking any allegations and concerns seriously and responding to them consistently in line with the school's policies and procedures
- ensure processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse as outlined in the Mandatory Reporting Policy
- implement strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- develop strategies to actively promote the participation and empowerment of children listening to their voice
- take account of the diversity of all children and make efforts to accommodate diversity aspects.
- commit to promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and provision of a safe environment for children with a disability.

## **Implementation:**

### **SEPS is committed to child safety through:**

- provision of a safe, happy and empowered environment where we support and respect all children, staff, volunteers and school community.
- commitment to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- a zero tolerance of child abuse where all allegations and safety concerns will be followed up through our robust policies and procedures.
- our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety
- commitment to protecting children by identifying risks early and acting on them accordingly.
- robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- support and respect of all children and school community members.
- commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.
- specific policies, procedures and training that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- Immediate action when we believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse by contacting authorities

### **Our children will be supported by;**

- This policy which is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at SEPS. 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.
- Promotion of diversity and tolerance in our school welcoming people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. In particular we:
  - promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal 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.

### **Our staff and volunteers will be supported by:**

- This policy which guides our staff and volunteers on how to interact with children in our school.
- Agreement by staff and volunteers 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.

### **Training and supervision**

- Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.
- SEPS 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, detect potential signs, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse.
- The school supports our staff and volunteers to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

- New employees and volunteers will be supervised 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 ensuring that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate in accordance with the *Code of Conduct*.
- 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.

### **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 ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- We encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- All people engaged in child-related work at our school, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the SEPS school policy on the school's website.
- Reference checks and police record checks will ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and VIT registration and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete.
- 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.

### **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 incident reporting processes including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.
- If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as a school undertakes.

### **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 any 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.

### **Legislative responsibilities**

- SEPS takes our 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 or other offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.

- Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual or other 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.

## **Risk management**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about 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, and online environments such as inappropriate contact with a child in organisations on social media.

## **Regular review**

- This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur.
- We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute to our school policy and processes.
- Where possible we will work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

## **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

SEPS takes all allegations seriously and has practices 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.
- 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.

## **References:**

[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards)

## **Evaluation:**

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

**This policy was ratified by School Council – October 2016**