CHILD SAFE POLICY

(including School Specific Procedures)

PURPOSE

Antonio Park Primary School's Child Safety Policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to School Council members where indicated.

The policy will apply to the school environment (see Definitions section). The policy covers both school hours and outside of school hours.

Definitions

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
  - a sexual offence; or
  - grooming; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
  - physical violence; or
  - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school, School Council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety

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.

School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school;
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, homestays, and other school activities or events)

School staff

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:
- employed by the Department of Education and Training;
- directly engaged or employed by the School Council; or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

This school is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

The school's approach to creating and maintaining a child safe school environment is guided by our school philosophy and values.

Vision

At Antonio Park Primary School, our purpose as an effective learning community is to believe in the achievement of excellence and the fulfilment of potential in a happy, caring and safe environment where students, staff and families feel a strong connection to each other and the school. We are committed to fostering a lifelong love of learning. We actively engage students in a range of authentic learning experiences. Through these our children will develop understandings and competencies needed to be successful learners and citizens in a rapidly changing world.

Values

Our Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community, including in relation to child safety. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of:

- Empathy
- Resilience
- Responsibility
- Independence
- Confidence

We call these our ERRIC values.

The school shares the universal values that:
Every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive.
Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

We know children can struggle to achieve their personal best if they are not safe from abuse.

The school has zero tolerance for child abuse.

We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, procedures, strategies and practices will be inclusive of the needs of all children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.

Every person involved in the school has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, the school will:
1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children.
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount.
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children.
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development.
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such concerns.
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities.
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

POLICY

Strategies to embed a child safe culture

The school culture encourages staff, students, parents/carers and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, *Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools* and the Four Critical Actions for Schools are readily available online and in hard copy at the school's reception for all staff, students and parents/carers to read at any time.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. **All school staff** are required to:

- Act in accordance with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the Four Critical Actions for Schools where necessary.
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety.
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
  - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
  - Duty of care (applies to all school staff)
  - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses)
  - Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
  - Reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch)

- o   Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)
- o   For more information on these obligations, see [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

As part of the school's child safe culture, **school leadership** (including the Principal and Assistant Principal[s]) will:

- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when implementing the Child Safe Standards.
- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings.
- Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse.
- Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegation.

As part of the school's child safe culture, **school mandatory reporting staff** are required to:

- Complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year.
- Read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.
- Read the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of the school's child safe culture, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, the **School Council and School Council members** will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at School Council meetings. [Please note that there is no requirement to discuss child safety at every School Council meeting, but it is best practice to have child safety on the agenda at some meetings to show that the school is embedding a culture of child safety and School Council members are informed and understand the issues.]
- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the [Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint](#).
- Approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to School Council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes
- When hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the Principal).

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Roles and responsibilities

School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- The Principal or nominee is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every two years (as part of VRQA requirements).

- The Principal or nominee is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach the Principal or nominee if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Principal or nominee is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in the school's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

Recruitment

The school follows the Department's Recruitment in Schools guide July 2019, to ensure child safe recruitment practices, available on the Department's website.

All prospective volunteers are required to comply with our school's Volunteers in Schools Policy, including in relation to assessing the suitability of prospective volunteers and obtaining checks required under this policy. A valid Working with Children Check will be required in compliance with this policy.

Training and supervision

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

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions 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. In compliance with MO 870, this training occurs annually or more often as required.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the school, including by being referred to the Child Safety Policy (this document), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website.

They will also be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported by school staff to the Principal or Assistant Principal and will be managed in accordance with this school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The school has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff (including School Council employees) must follow the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, including following the Four Critical Actions for Schools if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

We never will prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools and will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures can be found on the school's website.

Risk reduction and management

The school believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school's risk assessment register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

The school monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions it takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety, more information can be found in the school's risk assessment register.

Listening to, communicating with and empowering children

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students can access information on how to report abuse from their classroom teacher or any other staff member.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers, as appropriate) informed about progress. Please refer to the school's *Complaints Policy.*

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents/carers on the website.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school.
- School newsletters will inform students and the school community about the school's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety.
- Age-appropriate discussion of child safety with students, e.g. students making and displaying their own child safety posters.
- The Four Critical Actions are actively taught to mandatory reporters and other school staff.
- The Child Safe Standards are addressed and explained at year level assemblies or parent information sessions.

The school will use its health and wellbeing programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- Standards of behaviour for students attending the school.
- Healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality).
- Resilience.
- Child abuse awareness and prevention.

Communications

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are available on the school website.
- Once per term reminders in the school newsletter of our school's commitment to child safety.
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and School Council meetings for discussion
- Posters displayed throughout the school

Confidentiality and privacy

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the Department of Education and Training's Schools' Privacy Policy.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Related policies and documents include:

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Risk assessment register
- Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools
- Four Critical Actions for Schools
- Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools
- Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- School Policy and Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
- School Policy and Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations.

- Please refer also to the school's existing policies all of which are designed to create a safe environment for children:

	Bullying Prevention
Contractor Management	*Discipline, Student (DET Overview)*
Duty of Care	*Emergency & Critical Incidents*
Emergency & Incident Reporting	*Employment*
Incursions (Safety of Children Working with External Providers)	*Information & Privacy*
Digital Technologies	*Child Safety Responding & Reporting Obligations (Mandatory Reporting)*
Personal Mobile Devices	*Photographing & Filming Children*
Police & DHHS Interviews	*Risk Management*
Staff Code of Conduct	*Student Wellbeing & Engagement*
Visitors to the School	*Volunteers in Schools*

Working with Children (Suitability) Checks –
Volunteers & Visitors

Working with Children (Suitability) Checks – Staff

Responding to Student Sexual Offending

Yard Duty/Supervision

References:
Creating a Child Safe Organisation Guide
Child Safe Standards Toolkit
www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Principals/spag/safety/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx
and
Protect – Identifying All Forms of Child Abuse in Victorian Schools July 2019
www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/child safe

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy, first developed in this format in October 2019, will be reviewed two-yearly or if guidelines change (template availability 2 October 2019).

The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

This update was ratified by School Council in February 2020

See overleaf

Introduction

The protection of children and young persons is the responsibility of everyone who works at Antonio Park Primary School, including its staff, contractors, parents and volunteers. We all share responsibility for promoting the wellbeing and safety of children.

Antonio Park Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to acting in the best interests of children and to keeping them safe at all times.

Commitment

Antonio Park Primary School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Antonio Park Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Antonio Park Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Antonio Park Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Antonio Park Primary School is committed to promoting the best interests and child safety in its school environment, this is achieved by acknowledging;

All students have a right to:	All students have a responsibility to:
- Take part in learning programs that meet their individual needs	- Care and value themselves, others, teachers and the school community
- Feel secure and to be safe in a caring and supportive environment	- Be safety conscious in relation to themselves and others
- Work and play without interference in an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation	- Treat others with respect and good manners
- receive respect, kindness and courtesy and to be treated with fairness	- Keep the guidelines of good behaviour, modelling and supportive school rules
- Have learning continue without disruption in a supportive environment	- Develop a sense of accountability for their own actions
- Be valued for their individuality; race, gender, cultural, physical or intellectual diversity	- Work to achieve their personal best whilst allowing others to do the same
- Expect the school rules are fair, consistently implemented and respect the rights of all involved	- Allow for others to learn and to respect the rights of others

- implementing and continuously improving procedures and systems that promote and influence an organisational culture of child safety and that provides a safe environment for our students
- taking all allegations and concerns very seriously and responding to them consistently in line with our policies and procedures

It is the role of the Principal to monitor Antonio Park Primary School's adherence to this policy. This will be done by:

- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at leadership and staff meetings
- consideration by the Principal and responsible staff members of areas for continual improvement.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal and Leadership team are responsible for developing strategies that embed an organisational culture of child safety at APPS. These strategies will give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child's safety, health, development, education and wellbeing.

Everyone involved in APPS has a role to play and is responsible for protecting children, preventing harm to them and upholding the duty of care that APPS owes to all of its students.

Values and Principles

The following values and principles will guide APPS in implementing consistent policies and influence an organisational culture of child safety:

- Child safety policies and procedures will support ongoing assessment and identification and minimisation of the risk of child abuse in the School environment
- Our culture will foster openness so that all persons, and particularly children, may feel safe to disclose concerns or risks of harm to children
- Appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children will be expected at all times
- Policies will support the processes that assist the School to engage the most appropriate personnel to work with children
- Regular staff training will occur to ensure there is a full awareness and understanding of indicators of abuse and policies and processes
- Suspected or actual abuse of children will be reported promptly to the appropriate authorities
- Support and assistance will be provided to children who have suffered abuse and to their families

Recruitment

APPS will implement recruitment processes that will assist in the effective selection of suitable personnel, including staff, volunteers and contractors.

These processes will ensure:

- new and existing staff, volunteers and contractors understand the importance of child safety and are aware of APPS's policies and procedures
- each job or category of job for School staff that involves child-connected work has a clear statement, which includes the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and the essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety

- compliance with School policy for recruitment and selection of staff for obtaining, verifying and recording information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work, including processes for screening and background checks
- induction of new staff, volunteers and contractors into the School's policies, codes, practices and procedures governing child safety and child-connected work
- a staff member's continuing suitability for child-connected work is monitored and assessed.

Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

APPS will implement and continually improve its procedures for responding to and reporting suspected abuse of a student. APPS will also implement practices and programs that will support, encourage and enable School staff, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.

Our procedures will be based on the following:

- compliance with mandatory reporting laws and obligations imposed by the Children Youth and Family Act (CYFA) 2005 to report a belief that child abuse may have occurred
- ensuring any situation is handled appropriately
- concerns of child abuse are reported to Child Protection and relevant authorities
- APPS provides support to the person/s making allegations of child abuse
- all parties involved in an allegation of child abuse are treated fairly and consistently
- clarity as to who should notify any concerns and who to notify within APPS
- what processes should be followed during and after an investigation
- ensuring that reviewing and improving our processes is continuous
- they will be easily accessible for all persons within APPS and they will be simple and easy to understand for children.

APPS will support or assist children who disclose child abuse or suspected child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse, by:

- ensuring they have access to School support personnel, such as counsellors and School psychologists
- ensuring their situation is treated confidentially as possible and with sensitivity
- ensuring they have all the necessary staff support around them and are given due consideration for and necessary adjustments in the curriculum and co-curriculum programmes
- providing such other support or assistance as maybe reasonable

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.

Reducing or Removing Risks of Child Abuse

APPS will implement appropriate policies and practices for the early identification and response to risks of abuse in its physical and online environment. Such policies and practices will:

- promote understanding by all APPS personnel of its expectations in relation to behaviour and conduct when interacting with children and the consequences of failing to abide by those expectations
- seek to achieve ongoing risk assessment to identify and mitigate risk in the School's physical and online environment, taking into account the age and needs of the students, the nature of the activities undertaken at APPS and the particular risks they might present
- provide for ongoing training, education and support for all APPS personnel in relation to understanding child abuse, identifying risks and areas for improvement, the School's policies and practices for reporting concerns of child abuse and how to respond
- require appropriate human resource policies for appraisal and assessment of personnel in relation to compliance with their child safe obligations.

APPS will implement practices that increase the awareness within the School of the need for our internal systems to protect children.

Promoting Child Empowerment and Participation

The Principal, Health and Wellbeing Team and level Coordinators are responsible for developing strategies to deliver appropriate education about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending APPS
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- resilience
- child abuse awareness and prevention

APPS will ensure that the prevention approaches it adopts for its students will be focused on initiatives that build their awareness and encourage them to disclose behaviour that makes them feel unsafe.

Communication

The School community will be informed about this policy. It will be publicly available. It will be available on the School's website and communicated in the School's newsletters, personnel induction programs and during recruitment and enrolment processes for staff, contractors and volunteers.

All School Council members, staff, volunteers and contractors of APPS will be made aware of this policy and APPS's commitment to child safety.

Definitions

Definitions	Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:
	Child - An individual who is under the age of 18 years or who is enrolled as a student at APPS.
	Child abuse includes—
	• any act committed against a child involving:
	○ a sexual offence or
	○ an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
	• the infliction, on a child, of:
	○ physical violence or
	○ serious emotional or psychological harm
	○ serious neglect of a child.
	Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
	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.
	School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:
	• a campus of the school
	• online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
	• other locations 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 being: an individual working in a school environment who is:
	• directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
	a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
	• a minister of religion.

Related Documents

- Child Protection (Mandatory Reporting) Policy
- Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy
- Student Welfare
- Social Justice & Equal Opportunity
- Child Safety Code of Conduct

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often as circumstances require.

Date of approval by the School Council: **February 2020**