



# Child Safe Policy

## Rationale

School Council acknowledges the importance of Ministerial Order 870 in relation to Child Safety. This policy reflects the Order, which is a companion document to this policy.

This Child Safe Policy has been written with respect to the Bonbeach Primary School values and the principles set out below.

Bonbeach Primary School is committed to child safety and to our children to being principled, caring, balanced members of our community. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of our children and have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously. The school is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and all staff undertake Mandatory Reporting training.

Bonbeach Primary School acknowledges that embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in schools.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers and are committed to the cultural safety of children from diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Bonbeach Primary School acknowledges that student safety and wellbeing is a fundamental requirement underpinning a positive learning environment.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to reinforce 'Child Safety' as a school council priority for Bonbeach Primary School; this policy provides the foundation for and commitment to child safety in the school.

The child safety policy sets out the school's approach to creating 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.

As the school governing authority, council acknowledges its responsibility to inform the school community about this policy, and make the policy publicly available.

## Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

### Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
- a sexual offence, or
- an offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm, and
- serious neglect of a child.

#### **Child-connected work**

- 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**

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 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**

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)

## **Scope**

This policy reflects the Victorian Government Child Safe Standards that have arisen under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* - Ministerial Order 870, and advice provided by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

The Child Safe policy applies to staff, including school employees, contractors and volunteers, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people, parents and families, visitors and children.

This policy will apply across a range of school forums including camps, excursions and during before and after school care.

Council acknowledges the Principal's role in monitoring adherence to council policy, and operational policies referred to below.

#### **School Values**

The school values are confidence, getting along, organisation, resilience and persistence.

These operate in conjunction with five foundations including: Accepting myself; Taking risks;

Being independent; I can do it; Giving effort; Working tough; Setting goals; Planning my time; Being tolerant of others; Thinking first; and Playing by the rules.

## **Principles**

Bonbeach Primary School's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety can be found in Appendix A.

The following principles were taken into account when developing this policy:

- child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture;
- children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously;
- families and communities are informed and involved;
- equity is promoted and diversity respected;
- people working with children are suitable and supported;
- staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training;
- physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur;
- implementation of Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved; and
- policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

## **Inclusion Principles**

We are mindful of the diversity of students and school communities and include the following principles as part of each Standard:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with a disability.

We will also consider the needs of same sex attracted and intersex children and young people, and recognise gender diversity in providing a safe environment.

## **Implementation:**

### **Our children**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. 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. We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability

### **Our staff and volunteers**

This policy informs our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school. School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which is detailed in our Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy. 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 organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.
- The school 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.
- For all jobs that require child connected work there will be an induction process providing explicit information about the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities and the school's child safety practices, including the code of conduct (refer to the Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy).
- We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect all 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. *Bonbeach Primary School has a zero tolerance for any form of child abuse*

## Recruitment

- We take all reasonable steps to employ appropriately skilled people to work with children. We identify selection criteria through Recruitment Online which clearly demonstrates our commitment to child safety. The school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.
- All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the Working with Children Check website. ([www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)) for further information. We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are addressing the person's suitability for the job and working with children. VIT registration is compulsory and we require proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications.
- 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 form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.
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## 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 and will disclose how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

## Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.
- Failure to disclose offence: In addition to mandatory reporting and duty of care obligations, any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence except in limited circumstances, such as where the information has already been reported to Child Protection or the child is over 16 when the belief is formed.
- Failure to protect: Any staff member in a position of authority, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence. The offence applies only to adults in a position of authority within an organisation, including Principals, senior school staff, regional directors and other senior managers.

## 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 (for example, swimming), and online environments. *Bonbeach Primary School has a zero tolerance for any form of child abuse*

## Allegations, concerns and complaints

The school takes all allegations seriously and works 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; or
- observing suspicious behaviour.

The school's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found in the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Policy on the school's website. (hyperlink to be included once the above policy is approved by School Council).

### **Interaction with existing policies**

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

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying
- Emergency Management
- eSmart
- Facebook Code of Conduct
- Internet Usage
- ICT
- Child Safe Responding and Reporting
- Volunteers
- Safety & Welfare of Students Learning of an External Provider
- Visitor Policy
- Working with Children Checks
- Yard Supervision

### **Review Cycle**

This policy was last updated in September 2019 and is scheduled for review in September 2021.

## **Appendix A**

# **Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

Bonbeach 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.

Bonbeach Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Bonbeach 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 children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Bonbeach 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.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Bonbeach Primary 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 issues;
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.