



4.32 CHILD SAFE POLICY

POLICY

Beumaris North Primary School staff and parents consider the safety of students to be Paramount. The school community supports a child safety policy that minimises the risk to students by embedding a culture of zero tolerance for child abuse. 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

PURPOSE

The aim of the policy is to:

- Meet Department of Education & Training accountability requirements and in particular Ministerial Order 870 (January 7th 2016) from the Education & Training Reform Act 2006.
- Ensure BNPS demonstrates its commitment to creating a child safe environment.
- Raise awareness within the school community of the importance of child safety.
- Empower students who are key stakeholders within our organisation.
- Ensure the school develops and publishes a child safe policy that is compliant with the child safe standards.
- Ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards students.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Beumaris North Primary School is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, volunteers and the parent community.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children if applicable, to the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- 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.
- Any staff member who believes that a child is at immediate risk of abuse must phone 000.

- Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and 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 have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- The school's Child Safe policy will be publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in our organisation and demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse.
- The policy will be communicated to the school community via Compass, published on the school's website and provided to new families on enrolment.
- New staff will be provided with a copy and briefed on the school's commitment to child safety as part of the induction process.
- We will develop strategies to allow families and children have the opportunity to contribute to the development and review of this policy.
- Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Our Children

- This policy is intended to empower and protect our children who are 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, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:
 - Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (if applicable).
 - 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 in all aspects of school life.

Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with the children in our school.

- All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.
- 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 to the school office for entering on our WWCC register.

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 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.
- 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 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 regularly to ensure they understand our philosophy 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. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the Principal or Assistant Principal or directly to the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

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, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in our school on social media).

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 actively 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, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

- Whilst the safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern, we also are 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.
- If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to families (as appropriate) on progress and any actions we take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they are 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

The 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 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.

All teachers are **mandatory reporters** and must comply with their responsibilities. Non-teaching staff have an obligation to report if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of harm.

BNPS requires ALL staff to undertake the Mandatory Reporting eLearning Module annually.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

BNPS 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:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards

The school also has the following policies and documents all of which are designed to create a safe environment for children:

- Student Engagement & Inclusion
- Statement of Commitment
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying & Harassment
- eSmart/Use of ICT guidelines
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Procedures
- Recognising signs of Abuse and Neglect
- Managing a disclosure of child abuse
- Child First Reporting
- Visitors to School
- Supervision & Duty of Care
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Induction Booklet
- Working with Children Check
- Critical Incident Management
- Information Privacy
- Special Educational Needs

Ratified by School Council April 2017

Next Review Date 2018