**Aim**

The child safe environments 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.

Everyone at Cockatoo Primary School has the right to feel safe, happy and empowered by being supported and respected at all times. Cockatoo Primary School is committed to child safety.

Cockatoo Primary School is committed to every child being safe.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

**Statement of Commitment**

In its planning, decision-making and operations Cockatoo 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 whom 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; and

10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

**Our everyday actions will show:**

* Commitment to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
* Zero tolerance of child abuse
* That all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
* We will follow rigorously our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety
* We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
* We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
* We are 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 backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
* We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
* We have included Child safety as a standing item on staff meeting agenda.
* A leading teacher will be designated as the Child safety Officer. The position description will reflect this.

**If we believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse we phone 000.**

**Our children**

We will empower children who are vital and active participants by involving them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

Cockatoo Primary School promotes diversity and tolerance and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

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.
* recognise the diverse needs of children in our school and ensure that young children or children with disability may be at greater risk of abuse or exploitation and need greater levels of support and supervision.

**Our staff and volunteers**

This policy guides all Cockatoo Primary School staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

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 staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

**Implementation**

**Training and supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Cockatoo Primary School understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Our 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
* promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children,
* the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds
* the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our 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 the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

**Recruitment**

We will take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We will develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We will 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. Please see the Working with Children Check website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

We will carry out reference checks and police record checks 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 affected 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.

**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 will record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form1, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we will provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as a school will take.

**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 will 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**

Cockatoo Primary School 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 offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.2

• Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation 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.3

• Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.4

**Risk management**

In Victoria, schools 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 schools on social media).

**Allegations, concerns and complaints**

Cockatoo Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and promptly. 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

**•** 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 observed5 • someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it • observing suspicious behaviour.

**Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse**

Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies:

**•** Child Protection Policy and Procedures Policy

• Student Engagement, Inclusion and Wellbeing Policy

• Duty of Care Policy

**References**

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/childsafe.aspx http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx

**Evaluation**

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.

**Definitions**

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

1. Child abuse

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
  + serious emotional or psychological harm
  + serious neglect of a child.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. 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).

1. 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)
* a minister of religion.

**Related policies and documents**

* [School Policy and Advisory Guide - Duty of Care](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx)
* [School Policy and Advisory Guide - Child Protection Reporting Obligations](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/protection.aspx)
* [DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/expired/hwsfelements.aspx)
* [School Privacy Policy](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/privacy.aspx)

**Principal:** Darrelyn Boucher

This policy was last updated in September 2018 and is scheduled for review in September 2020 or conduct a review after a potential risk or report occurs in the school.