

Footscray City Primary School

Child Safe Policy



1. Introduction

The care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people at Footscray City Primary School is the responsibility of everyone who works at our school, including staff, contractors, parents and volunteers. We all share the responsibility for promoting the wellbeing and safety of children, Footscray City Primary School has a zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to acting in the best interests of children and to keeping them safe at all times. Our commitment is drawn from our school values.

Values: Respect, Honesty, Fairness, Empathy and Excellence.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Footscray City Primary School to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment: on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This policy takes into account the relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victoria Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No 870 and it applies to all school staff, including school employees, volunteers and contractors.

3. Principles

State schools have a moral and legal responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices heard and they are safe and feel safe.

- The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Footscray City Primary School:
- All students deserve, as a fundamental right safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect
- Our school works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents, guardians, caregivers.

- All adults in our school, including teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers and contractors as well as the broader school community, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults, children and young people.
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with governments, the police and human services agencies.
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- Staff, volunteers, contractors, parents/guardians and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership.
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

4. Definitions

Child: A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the school.

Child abuse includes:

(a) any act committed against a child involving:

- (i) a sexual offence
- (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)

(b) the infliction, on a child, of:

- (i) physical violence
- (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm

(c) serious neglect of a child. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

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. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

Child neglect: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

Child physical abuse: Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

Child protection: Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

Child sexual abuse: Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can also be:

- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated
- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion
- sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion
- non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

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Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

Reasonable Belief: When staff is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

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) school campus-10 Hyde Street, Footscray, Victoria, 3011
- (b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- (c) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting venues, excursions, competitions, and other events). ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))<http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf>

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School staff means an individual working in a school environment that is:

- (a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- (b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

5. Policy Commitments

All students enrolled at Footscray City Primary School have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and /or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

Our commitment to the students at Footscray City Primary School

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school.
- (b) We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- (c) We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- (d) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- (e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- (f) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

Our commitment to parents and guardians

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about or child-safety practice, policies and procedures.
- (c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- (d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.
- (e) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

Our commitment to our school staff (including all school employees, volunteers and contractors)

- (a) We commit to providing all Footscray City Primary School staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfill their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- (b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities and reporting concerns.
- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Footscray City Primary School staff, volunteers, and contractors about keeping young children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for Footscray City Primary School employees volunteers and contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

6. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

Everyone employed or volunteering at Footscray City 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 students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

The school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows:

6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership

The principal, the school governing authority (School Council) and school leaders at Footscray City Primary School recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety.

Responsibilities include:

- Creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe.
- Upholding high principles and standards for all staff, volunteers, and contractors.
- Promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration.
- Ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff.
- Ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters.
- Providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing.
- Ensuring the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

6.2 Guide to Responsibilities of School Staff

Responsibilities of school staff (employees, volunteers and contractors) include:

- Treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care.
- Following the legislative and internal school processes in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been, or is being abused or neglected.
- Providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured.
- Undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people.
- Assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours that recognize the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse.
- Following the Child Safety Code of Conduct of Footscray City Primary School.

7. Expectation of our School Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct

At Footscray City Primary School we expect all school employees, volunteers and contractors to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the school. All staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with the requirements. We have developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct which recognizes the critical role that school staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of school employees, volunteers and contractors, for appropriate behaviour with children, in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

Our Code also protects school staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

8. Student Safety and Participation

At Footscray City Primary School, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns student, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

9. Procedures for Reporting and Responding to suspected child abuse

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our school complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under *the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)*, the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)* and the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report.

Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements.

At Footscray City our procedures will be based on the following:

- Compliance with the mandatory reporting laws and obligations imposed by criminal law to report a belief (based on reasonable grounds) that child abuse may have occurred
- Ensuring that any situation is handled appropriately
- The concerns of child abuse are reported to the Victoria police and relevant authorities
- Footscray City will provide support to the person/s making the allegations of child abuse
- All parties involved in the allegation of child abuse are treated fairly and consistently
- Clarity around what processes should be followed during and after an investigating
- The processes should be easily accessible and simple and easy for children to understand
- Ensuring that the review and improvement of process is continuous

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

- Ensuring they have access to school and DET support personnel such as counselors and psychologists.
- Ensuring the situation is treated confidentially 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.
- Providing such other support or assistance as may be reasonable.

10. Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

Footscray City Primary School will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and a copy of the Footscray City Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy is available to all applicants.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- Confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant).
- Obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications.
- Verify the applicant's history of work involving children.
- Obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

11. Child Safety – Education and Training for School Staff

Footscray City Primary School provides employees and volunteers with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

Child Safety education and training will be covered in the induction process of all new staff and staff will be required to complete DET online modules relating to child safety.

12. Risk Management

At Footscray City Primary School we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety to ensure that we are responsive and that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

13. Relevant Legislation

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Com)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.). Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act and they are: Failure to disclose offence; Failure to protect offence; Grooming offence.

14. Related Policies

- **Department of Education and Training Policies**
- **Footscray City Primary School Policies and Documents (currently under review)**

E.g. Child Protection –Reporting Obligations

Duty of Care Policy
Mandatory Reporting
Volunteer's Policy
Visitors to the School Policy
Working with Children Check Policy
Student Supervision Procedures
Managing Complaints and Grievances Policy
Student Well Being and Engagement Policy
Prep 2017 Parent Information Booklet

15. Breach of Policy

Where an employee is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, Footscray City Primary School may start the process under Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance guidelines for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the principal is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Regional Director. Relevant notification should also be made to the Department of Education and Training.

Where any other member of the school community is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the school is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with Complaints Resolution Policy and other relevant school policies.


16. Review of this Child Safety Policy

At Footscray City Primary School we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

17. Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently, as circumstance require.

History of Updates to Policy

Date policy was developed	November 2016
Author	Jessie Hand - Principal
Approved by	School Council
Approval Authority	 Jessie Hand - Principal
Date of review	Tuesday 18 th December 2018
Responsible for review	Jessie Hand - Principal
Review Date	December 2019
Person responsible for this policy	Principal Student Engagement and Wellbeing Coordinator

Child Safety Officers

Jessie Hand - Principal

Alison Handley – Student Engagement and Wellbeing Coordinator

Christine Purcell – Assistant Principal

Footscray City Primary School has a strong commitment to child safety and to the adherence to the Child Safe Standards and these are highly visible throughout the school.

As a school we have appointed three Child Safety Officers whose primary role is to lead the school in this area by providing advice, raising awareness and offering support to our students and their families, our staff and our school community.

Safety Officer Roles:

Provide authoritative advice

- act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety
- liaise with the principal and school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety
- lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety

Raise awareness

- ensure the school's policies are known and used appropriately
- ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework
- ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this
- be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers
- encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

Train

Being authoritative in providing advice by:

- keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years
- having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so
- be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referral
- ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff
- make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and DET policies and guidance.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/safeenviro.aspx>

It is to be noted that the responsibility of ensuring children are safe remains with all members of our school community at all times. Having Child Safety Officers does not, in any way, negate individual staff responsibility under mandatory reporting obligations.