



Child Protection and Safety Policy

Rationale:

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that detail:

- The principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment
- The actions the school proposes to take to demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy
- Support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- Support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Aims:

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. In particular, we promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of indigenous students, promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally in all aspects of school life (refer to LPS Student Inclusion and Engagement Policy and Duty of Care Policy).

Staff, Volunteers & Contractors

This policy guides our staff, volunteers and contractors (who are involved in child-related work or work in an environment with children present) on how to behave and interact with the children in our school. All must agree to abide by our **Child Safe Code of Conduct** which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children or in an environment where children are present.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety:

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional and psychological harm, serious neglect and an exposure to family violence.

Langwarrin Primary School is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse. We have a **zero tolerance** for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The school regard its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the

necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations to maintain a child safe culture.

Guidelines for Implementation:

School Council

Each member of the School Council is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Protection and Safety Policy to be effectively implemented within the school and are responsible for holding the Principal and School Executive accountable for effective implementation.

Principal

The Principal is responsible and will be accountable for taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy is implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the school. The Principal is responsible for appointing the role of Child Protection Officer within the school.

Child Protection Officer

The Child Protection Officer receives additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the school. They are also responsible for promoting child protection within the school and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the school's Child Protection Officer or Principal.

Direct Contact Volunteers

Direct contact volunteers are volunteers who work directly with our students. This may include but is not limited to: volunteers who work with children in the classroom, on camps and excursions or with other related school events. Direct contact volunteers are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the school's Child Protection Officer or Principal.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect contact volunteers (or 'indirect volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. Examples of indirect contact volunteer activities may include but are not limited to: assisting with the organisation of school functions. Indirect contact volunteers are not responsible for supervising students and would not have unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service. All indirect volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the school environment. All indirect volunteers are required by the school to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Third Party Contractors

All third party contractors (service providers) engaged by the school are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the school environment. All service

providers engaged by the school are required by the school to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct. The school only uses third party contractors that have and can produce current Working with Children Checks (refer to LPS Working with Children Check Policy).

External Education Providers

An external education provider is any organisation that the school has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the school. The delivery of such a course may take place on school premises or elsewhere. All external education providers engaged by the school are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the school environment. All external education providers engaged by the school are required by the school to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct. The school only uses external education providers that have and can produce current Working with Children Checks (refer to LPS Working with Children Check 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 discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff 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 indigenous children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the Child Protection Officer, Principal or directly to the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

The school takes 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 indigenous peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

Whilst 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. 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

Our school takes its legal responsibilities seriously including:

- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties (refer to LPS Mandatory Reporting Policy).
- **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 the age of 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 the age of 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 staff member or organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing an adult from child-related work pending an 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 only applies 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. 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.

Allegations 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 or if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

If an adult believes a student is at immediate risk of abuse they must phone 000.

If such circumstances arise the school will, as far as practicable, protect the child from immediate harm.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have reasonable belief that an incident took place. If an adult forms a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include:

- 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.