

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand the various legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety that apply to Murchison Primary School (MPS). The specific procedures that are applicable at our school are contained at Appendix A.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities and services including Outside School Hours Care.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Murchison 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.

Murchison Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Murchison 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 and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Murchison 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.

MPS's commitment to Child Safe has been developed in accordance with the Victorian Government Ministerial Order 870.

Principles of Implementation

In its planning, decision-making and operations Murchison Primary School will:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;

- 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;
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

RATIONALE

Murchison Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. All staff and volunteers will be educated about the school's commitment to child safety through induction and training, policy documentation and regular review practices.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Training will involve recognising and responding to child abuse for leadership, relevant program management personnel, staff and volunteers, including what to do if an allegation is made or a concern raised or when a staff member observes abusive behaviour towards a child.
- Promotion of a confidential reporting culture for suspected abuse by ensuring the principal or principal's delegate takes responsibility for incidents at all levels.
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities.
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.
- Maintain a data base system that records child safety issues and responses of any incidents and that data is stored appropriately to protect the privacy of children.
- All children, and in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability; will participate in all school activities with modifications considered to ensure maximum inclusion.
- A culturally safe environment will be provided for all children from diverse cultural backgrounds in partnership with families and community.
- The school environment will be modified to support children with a disability as deemed relevant and in accordance with the student's educational plan which will be informed by a multidisciplinary team approach.
- Develop and maintain relationships with families, communities, allied health services and relevant organisations to promote child safety within and at events associated with the school.
- The school's Child Safe Standards policy and practices will be reviewed annually or more regularly as required, particularly following an incident.
- Child Safe procedures will be a regular meeting agenda item for leadership team and staff.

- Communication of child safe procedures and practices will be communicated regularly through the school's newsletter, assembly, school council, parent forums and other means as deemed relevant.
- A statement of commitment to child safety will be included in all Position Descriptions and Roles of Responsibility documents for all staff members and in induction information for volunteers.
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
- Maintain robust human resource and recruitment practices for all staff, volunteers and visitors to our school
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives

EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the school's annual review cycle or as required following a child safety issue.

RATIFICATION:

This policy was last ratified by School Council in June 2019

Child Safe Code of Conduct 2019

Murchison Primary School (MPS) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Murchison Primary School will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Murchison Primary School will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety [Page 2] at all times and adhering to the school's child safe policy [Page 4]
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Torres Strait Islander students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership team

- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations, including mandatory reporting procedures (see page 10) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour; for example - offering gifts
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc.) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes¹
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy² or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

This Code of Conduct was approved and ratified by the Murchison Primary School Council in June 2019.

A Review of this Code of Conduct will occur annually or if there are any legislative or other changes in the interim.

¹ SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx> . The policy says the school should get consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. The same policy applies for excursions and school activities.

² SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/alcohol.aspx>. The policy says the school must obtain school council approval before alcohol can be consumed on school grounds or at a school activity. The policy says staff members should not consume alcohol during camps and excursions.

Staff Selection, Supervision and Management Practices for a Child Safe Environment

STAFF, PARENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

Strong human resource practices promote Child Safe school environments and reduce the risk of child abuse. This policy guides our staff, parent helpers and volunteers on how to behave with children. All of our staff, parents and volunteers must agree to abide by our Child Safety Standards Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. Employees and volunteers in our school are supported by the Principal, Assistant Principal, leadership team and Student Engagement and Wellbeing Team- with specific roles of responsibility such as hearing or being informed about allegations or concerns, providing direction and support to others, maintaining documentation and ensuring policy and procedures are adhered to.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Murchison Primary School (MPS) understands that child safety is everyone's collective responsibility. Our school provides a climate for staff, students and community members to feel confident in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Staff receive induction and ongoing training on a regular basis with a particular focus on:

- Identifying, assessing and minimising risks of child abuse
- Detecting and the reporting of potential signs of child abuse
- MPS policy and procedures – including the Code of Conduct and Child Safety Policy
- Legislative requirements such as the Mandatory Reporting Policy and Maintaining a Working with Children Check
- Cultural awareness and safety training to ensure the school maintains inclusive practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with disabilities

The school leadership team will also maintain proactive practices to ensure that staff and volunteers display appropriate child safe practices. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the relevant channels including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

RECRUITMENT

MPS will take all reasonable steps to employ skilled, high quality employees to work with our children. We adhere to the requirements of Ministerial Order No 870 to this end.

All advertisements will clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. We encourage applications from people of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander or diverse cultural backgrounds, and people with disabilities; and make merit-based decisions on suitability for the position.

All teachers will have Victorian Institute of Teaching registration which includes National Criminal History Records checks. Education Support staff are required to undergo and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

All people engaged in 'child connected work' by Murchison Primary School, including volunteers and tradespeople are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this.

FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL

The safety and wellbeing of our children is our primary concern. Employees and volunteers will be made aware of reporting and disciplinary procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within our organisation.

We will respond in a fair and transparent manner to all reports. Decisions made when recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent and based on evidence.

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff members, volunteers, parents or children –unless there is a considered risk to someone's safety. Murchison Primary School has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, how it is stored, what will be done with it and who will have access to it.

Response Procedures

Murchison Primary School has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child who may need protection.

We take all allegations seriously and have procedures in place to investigate thoroughly and in a timely manner. Our staff members are trained to deal appropriately with allegations. We are proactive in our approaches and aim to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim of abuse or notice inappropriate behaviour. (See procedures below).

If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, they must report the incident.

Factors that contribute to a reasonable belief may be:

- A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes in fact, a child may be referring to themselves)
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abused victim is observed
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour

Immediate action should include reporting concerns to the Principal or member of our school leadership team of the concerns and reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a report by contacting to DHHS [Department of Health and Human Services] Child Protection Unit, Police, DET or another appropriate agency. The report and course of action is to be documented.

When a child discloses an incident of abuse to you:

Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.

Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.

Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.

Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, the Principal or the police.

Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.

Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.

As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Principal or Assistant Principal, police or child protection.

Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern:

Explain that MPS has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.

Ask about the wellbeing of the child.

Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.

Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.

Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Principal or the police or child protection.

Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.

Provide them with an incident report form to complete or complete it together.

Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.

Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

NOTE: You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, or an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Officer.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters.

Advice on communicating with people with a disability can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website:

Communicate and Consult with People with a Disability:

<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/communicate-and-consult-people-disability>

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

Legislative responsibilities

MPS takes our legal responsibilities seriously. We understand that every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in our school or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

Failure to Disclose

All adults, not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16.

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. In a school context, this may include Principals, Assistant Principals, and Campus Principals.

NOTE: While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities.

More information about Failure to Disclose is available on the Department of Education and Training website:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/reportobligations.aspx#link53>

More information about mandatory reporting is available on the MPS Child Protection Reporting

Risk Management

Murchison Primary School believes the wellbeing of children is paramount and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. We recognise there are potential risks to children and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks under the 5 requirement areas identified in Ministerial Order No 870.

As part of our proactive practices we will conduct a risk assessment using the PROTECT Risk Assessment Template on the Department of Education and Training website:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/safeenviro.aspx#link82>

Requirement 1:

The school leadership team must develop and implement risk management strategies regarding child safety in school environments.

Requirement 2:

The school's risk management strategies regarding child safety must identify and mitigate the risk(s) of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Requirement 3:

If the school governing authority identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more school environments the authority must make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls).

Explanatory note: Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk.

Requirement 4:

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school's leadership team must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

Requirement 5:

At least annually, the school leadership team must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the school leadership team and school staff about:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
- child abuse risks in the school environment; and the school's current child safety standards

An annual review process will take place or following significant incidents if they should occur.

Strategies to Promote Child Empowerment & Participation

Murchison Primary School (MPS) has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children and their parents and carers. We encourage child and parent/ carer involvement and engagement that will inform safe school operations and builds the capacity of children and parents and carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainants account of things and take them seriously, check the understanding and keep the child (or their parents/ carer) informed about the progress.

Resources available at Murchison Primary School

- Wellbeing Team
- Principal
- Program for Students with Disabilities Coordinator and Support staff team
- Koorie Education Support Officer
- Life Education Van
- Contractors Induction Booklet
- Murchison Primary School – Bullying Prevention Policy
- Murchison Primary School – Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Murchison Primary School –Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Staff Induction Booklet
- Strategies based School Wide Positive Behaviours
- SWPBS matrix founded on the School Values, safe, responsible, respectful learners
- Student Leadership program
- Annual participation in the Bravehearts program
- Individual Education Plans
- Bee Awards
- Parent Education Programs

Key Documents linked to the Murchison Primary School Child Safe Standards Policy

- Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template for Victorian Schools
- Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse – Flow Chart
- Ministerial Order 870
- Murchison Primary School Mandatory Reporting Policy

- Feeling Safe – Primary School Students
- Spotting the warning signs of child abuse: for school staff
- Protecting children from abuse: for parents and carers
- Anaphylaxis Management Policy (Last ratified: 25/2/19)
- Annual Acceptable Use Agreement (ICT)
- Asthma Policy (Last ratified: 26/3/18)
- Attendance Policy (Last ratified: 1/4/19)
- Bullying Prevention Policy (Last ratified: 27/8/18)
- Camps Policy (Last ratified: 25/2/19)
- Child Protection Reporting Policy (Last ratified: 4/9/17)
- Digital Technologies Policy (Last ratified: 27/8/18)
- Duty of Care Policy (Last ratified: 26/3/18)
- Emergency Management Plan 2018-19
- First Aid Policy (26/3/18)
- Health Care Needs (Last ratified: 26/3/18)
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy (Last ratified: 26/3/18)
- Photographing, Filming and Recording Students Annual Consent Form and Collection Notice
- Responding to Intruder Threat – Emergency Management Plan 2018-19
- Staff Induction Policy: Induction Handbook, CRT Induction Handbook 2019
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy Policy (Last ratified: 26/3/18)
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy (Last ratified: 26/3/18)
- Volunteer's Policy (Last ratified: 01/04/2019)
- Visitors Policy (Last ratified: 1/4/2019)
- Yard Duty and Supervision Policy (Last ratified: 25/2/19)