



SASSAFRAS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Child Safe Policy

RATIONALE

Our statement of commitment to child safety

Sassafras Primary School is committed to child safety. We support and respect all children and are committed to their safety, happiness, participation and empowerment.

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.

Sassafras Primary School is 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 are committed to the cultural safety of all children including 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.

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

GUIDELINES

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Sassafras Primary 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 at Sassafras Primary School, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children.

We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

We ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children at Sassafras Primary 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 staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision

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

Sassafras Primary School's 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
- promote the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds
- promote the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Sassafras Primary School's 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 this organisation's 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 take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We follow the Department of Education and Training guidelines in the development of selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. We understand that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We consider 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 or Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration and to provide evidence of this documentation.

We carry out reference checks and the VIT carries out police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. 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 record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

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

Privacy

The school adheres to the relevant Privacy Legislation and we have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Legislative responsibilities

Sassafras Primary School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Responsibility 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.
- **Responsibility to protect:** People of authority in Sassafras Primary School 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.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about responsibility 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 is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Sassafras Primary School 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 (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 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.

REVIEW OF POLICY

The school will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of all aspects of this policy as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the school community.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in

28 November 2016