



## Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Bridgewood Primary School on 87669400.

### Purpose

Please refer to the Bridgewood student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy as this document adds a specific Bridgewood focus for student engagement and wellbeing.

#### [Bridgewood Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy](#)

The Bridgewood Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

### Scope

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

### Definitions

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety

- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority
- student
- volunteer

## **Statement of commitment to child safety**

Bridgewood is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## Roles and responsibilities

School leadership team

Our school leadership team (comprising the principal, assistant principal, learning specialists and leading teachers) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and assistant principals and the school leadership team will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
  - create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

## School staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct  
[W 2022 Bridgewood - Child Safety Standards .docx](#)
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures  
[W 2022 Bridgewood - Child Safety Standards .docx](#) , including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)

- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

## School council

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety, School councils can use the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. The following statement will be added to our hiring processes "At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy".

### Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Bridgewood has nominated a child safety champion and a Wellbeing Team to support the principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#). In addition to these roles, our child safety champion is also responsible for:

Our principal, child safety champion or the assistant principals are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- Assistant Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Assistant Principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- the Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meets regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The SIT Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

Our SIT Risk Management Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

## **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct [W](#) 2022 Bridgewood - Child Safety Standards .docx also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

## **Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Our school promotes child safety and managing risk in physical and online environments. Refer to [PROTECT Child Safe Standard 9](#) guidance for suggestions.

## **Establishing a culturally safe environment**

At Bridgewood, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

Our school has many and varied strategies and actions to promote cultural safety, such as:

- Begin events and meetings with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item. Use this as an opportunity to pause and reflect or open a discussion.
- Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school grounds.
- Display posters and signs to Acknowledge Country and Traditional Owners.
- Make Aboriginal voice part of decision making in matters that affect Aboriginal students. Be open to different ways of doing and expressing things.

- Celebrate the local Aboriginal community in communications with students, staff, volunteers and families. Share information through school newsletters, school assemblies, parent information nights.
- Lead on safety and inclusion for all Aboriginal students and their families. Learn more about Aboriginal histories and cultures, both locally and across Australia. Speak with respect and confidence about Aboriginal culture, knowledge systems and people.
- Build school wide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes.

Other ideas can be found at the following site [PROTECT Child Safe Standard 1](#) our current strategies and actions will be expanded with reference to this site.

## **Student empowerment**

To support child safety and wellbeing at Bridgewood, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging the Flagship program of Leaders in Me and through integrating Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct, our school values.

We inform students of their rights through our Leader in Me program which integrates Respectful Relationships and our school values into a whole school way of being. This program is introduced through our Bridge to Learning program at the start of each year and it is taught through weekly lessons in each Learning community. This program gives students the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.

Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns at [bridgwood.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:bridgwood.ps@education.vic.gov.au)

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

We have a number of support personnel at Bridgewood who engage regularly with the students and these people are also trusted adults who can support our students. We have counselling services and a psychologist onsite for students to access.

## **Family Engagement**

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Bridgewood we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- sharing our current policies on the school website
- - posting the policies home to families via Compass
- gaining feedback from parents on our school council
- engaging with families during formal meetings and sharing the contents of our child safety policies.
- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents at our school reception and at our website [bridgewood.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:bridgewood.ps@education.vic.gov.au)
- A compass post will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- During parent teacher interviews and formal partnership meetings staff will ask parents and carers about their children and note any information shared that is of importance to the child and to their safety.
- Provide parents and carers with information about children's rights via Compass and parent information sessions.
- Regularly engage with parents, carers and students and discuss the needs of students through parent/teacher interviews over the year as necessary.
- Bridgewood will take opportunities at events such as Bridgewood fundraising Group, information Evenings and posts to parents via Compass to ensure the child Safety message gets out into our community. We intend to seek community views where appropriate to do so and we will make sure our processes are in place to manage disclosures if they arise.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school

## Diversity and equity


As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

### Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

 [Bridgewood Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy.docx](#) provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

School strategies and actions for diversity and equity as per Ministerial Order 1359, Clauses 9.2 and 9.3 - Refer to [PROTECT Child Safe Standard 5](#) guidance for suggestions]

The School council as the school governing authority must, at a minimum, ensure:

- a) the school, including staff and volunteers, understands the diverse circumstances of children and students, and provides support and responds to vulnerable children and students.
- b) children, students, staff, volunteers and the school community or school community have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- c) the school pays particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students.
- d) the school pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal students and provides and promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

There are many ways that school staff can determine if a child or student is vulnerable. Vulnerable children and students may include, but are not limited to, children or students who:

- a) are deemed vulnerable by a government agency, funded family service or family violence service, or assessed as requiring education and care outside the family home.
- b) are identified as vulnerable as a result of a referral from a government agency, funded family service or family violence service, homeless or youth justice service; or mental health or other health service.
- c) self-identify or are identified by school staff or school boarding premises staff as a member of a vulnerable cohort (for example Aboriginal children and students; children and students with disability; children and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; children and students who are unable to live at home or are in outof-home care; international students; and children and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+).

Schools may also need to consider a range of other factors beyond those listed above when determining whether a child or student is vulnerable.

## **Suitable staff and volunteers**

At Bridgewood we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

### **Staff Recruitment**

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education and Training's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)



- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management.](#)

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - the person's history of working with children
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

### **Staff induction**

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

### **Ongoing supervision and management of staff**

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by regular PLC meetings, ongoing engagement with the staff and regular performance reviews as deemed necessary.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

Bridgewood's people management processes are in line with Ministerial Order 1359, Clause 10. Refer to [PROTECT Child Safe Standard 6](#)

- Schools must ensure that people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. In complying with this statement the school's governing authority must, at a minimum, ensure:
  - a) recruitment advertisements for school staff or school boarding premises staff who will be engaged in child-connected work have a clear statement that sets out:
    - (i) the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing;
    - (ii) the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing.
  - b) all applicants for jobs that involve child-connected work for the school must be informed about the child safety practices of the school (including the code of conduct).
  - c) when engaging volunteers to undertake child-connected work, volunteers are made aware of the child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct of the school or provider of school boarding services.
  - d) when engaging school staff to perform child-connected work, the school governing authority must:
    - (i) sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance, if the person is required to have a clearance in accordance with the Worker Screening Act 2020, or any equivalent background check;
    - (ii) where the person will be engaged in child-related work, collect and record:
      - a. proof of the person's identity;
      - b. information about any essential or relevant professional or other qualifications;
      - c. the person's history of work involving children;
      - d. references that address the person's suitability for the job and for working with children.

Please refer to the Worker Screening Act 2020 which establishes a process to screen persons engaging or intending to engage in child-related work through a screening check, and also sets out exemptions from that requirement for some volunteers, parents and others. The school may need to gather a range of information, including but not limited to a Working with Children clearance and qualifications relevant to the role being performed, to help ensure only suitable people work with children. Registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching is an equivalent background check.
  - e) when engaging a volunteer to perform child-connected work, the school governing authority or school boarding premises governing authority must:
    - (i) sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance, if the person is required to have a clearance in accordance with the Worker Screening Act 2020, or any equivalent background check;
    - (ii) consider the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record: a. proof of personal identity; b. information about any

essential or relevant professional or other qualifications; c. the person's history of work involving children; and d. references that address the person's suitability for the job and for working with children.

10.3 The school governing authority need not comply with the requirements in clauses 10.2(d) and 10.2(e) if it has already undertaken these activities in relation to a particular individual within the previous 12 months. 10.4 In complying with clause 10.1, the school governing authority must ensure that:

a) school staff members of the governing body, and volunteers engaged in child-connected work, receive an induction regarding child safety and wellbeing that is appropriate to the nature of the role, and which includes:

(i) information on the child safety code of conduct;

(ii) where relevant to the role, the child safety and wellbeing policy and the procedures for managing complaints and concerns related to child abuse; b) school staff, members of the governing body, and volunteers engaged in child-connected work, are aware of their responsibilities to children and students, information sharing and reporting obligations, and record keeping obligations. c) ongoing supervision and people management of staff and volunteers focuses on child safety and wellbeing.

## Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy

[W Bridgewood Volunteers Policy.docx](#) which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

## Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students

- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

Bridgewood's training program here - refer to [PROTECT Child Safe Standard 8](#)

To comply with this standard, at minimum, schools must:

- provide child safety training to staff engaged in child-connected work every year. This training should include:
  - the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct
  - the procedures for responding to complaints and concerns about child abuse
  - guidance on recognising indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and students
  - guidance on responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
  - guidance on how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
  - guidance on their information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
  - guidance on how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- Provide training and information to volunteers engaged in child-connected work that is appropriate to their role that will equip them with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe.
- Support staff and volunteers to implement the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct where these policies apply to their role and responsibilities.
- Provide appropriate training and guidance to the members of the governing body every year. This training should include:
  - individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
  - child safety and wellbeing risks in the school
  - the child safety policies, procedures and practices of the school.

## **School council training and education**

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment

- Bridgewood's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

## Complaints and reporting processes

Bridgewood fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found at

[W Bridgewood Managing Complaints and Grievances policy.docx](#)

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees and homestay providers) must follow our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#). Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

[W Bridgewood Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy.docx](#) and Bullying Prevention

Policy [Bridgewood Bullying Prevention Policy](#) covers complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

## Communications

Bridgewood is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT around the school
- updates on our school Facebook page and via compass
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

## Privacy and information sharing

Bridgewood collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

## Records management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

## Review of child safety practices

At Bridgewood we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

To comply with this standard, at minimum, schools must:

- review and evaluate their child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices after any significant child safety incident, or at least every 2 years and improve where applicable
- analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures and to inform continuous improvement
- report on the outcomes of relevant reviews to staff, volunteers, the community, families and students.

## Related policies and procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- **Bullying Prevention Policy**
- **Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures**
- **Child Safety Code of Conduct**
- **Complaints Policy**
- **Digital Learning Policy**
- **Inclusion and Diversity Policy**

- **Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy**
- **Visitors Policy**
- **Volunteers Policy**

## **Related Department of Education and Training policies**

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

## **Other related documents**

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

## **Policy status and review**

The school Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the Bridgewood community.

## Approval

<b>Created date</b>	<b>May 9th 2022</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Consultation on this policy is mandatory. Consultation occurred through term 2 2022 via Compass, Community Group meetings and School Council meetings.</b>
<b>Endorsed by</b>	<b>Kerry Coffey</b>
<b>Endorsed on</b>	<b>June 14th 2022</b>
<b>Next review date</b>	<b>May 2024</b>



## **Standard 1: Child Safety and Effective Leadership**

**The child safe standards require schools to have strategies to embed a school culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements. Protecting children from abuse is everybody's business, and a school's leadership is essential to instilling a child safety culture.**

**Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council.**

### **Leadership in a child safe environment**

Working with children can be very rewarding, and it brings additional responsibilities.

We must act to protect children from abuse and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This requires a culture of child safety to be embedded throughout Bridgewood Primary School so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. Such a culture is achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours of an organisation.

A child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. Bridgewood Primary School fosters a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

All staff and volunteers consider the safety of all children, and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.<sup>1</sup>

### **Governance in a child safe environment**

Leadership takes preventative, proactive and participatory approaches to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children at Bridgewood Primary School are paramount and given consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices.

---

<sup>1</sup> For definitions of key terms, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)  
<www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/word\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\_overview.doc>.

### **Leadership responsibilities**

Leadership and school council are responsible for embedding a culture of child safety at Bridgewood Primary School. Leadership takes the lead in protecting children from abuse and is made aware of child abuse allegations and risks and takes responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

Bridgewood Primary School ensures that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.

### **Identify and analyse risk of abuse**

Bridgewood Primary School adopts an approach to prevent, detect and respond to child abuse risks. This includes a risk management strategy and policy that sets out how we identify, assess and the steps taken to reduce or remove child abuse risks.

### **Develop a child safe policy**

Bridgewood Primary School has developed a child safe policy which outlines our commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

### **Develop codes of conduct**

Bridgewood Primary School has a code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children.

We also refer to professional codes of conduct where appropriate ie. DET and VIT documents.

### **Choose suitable employees and volunteers**

Bridgewood Primary School takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This includes police record and identity checks, Working with Children Checks where required, face-to-face interviews and detailed reference checks from previous employers.

### **Support, train, supervise and enhance performance**

Bridgewood Primary School ensures that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to help protect children from abuse. The Principal or her delegate are persons in our school who have knowledge of child safety issues and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of abuse.

### **Promote inclusion**

Bridgewood Primary School is inclusive to all children and families. We have a culture that supports:

- cultural safety for Aboriginal children, for example by working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations
- cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, for example by using inclusive language and images in policy documents and communications such as the website and newsletters
- the safety of children with a disability, for example by ensuring our organisation is accessible to everyone and ensuring appropriate training and supervision of staff and volunteers working with children with a disability.

### **Empower and promote the participation of children in decision-making**

Bridgewood Primary School promotes the involvement and participation of children in developing and maintaining child safe environments. For example, we provide opportunities for children to express their views on our child safe policy and code of conduct and then incorporate this feedback to improve our policies and practices. Ideas from children are sought through suggestion boxes, emails or feedback sessions.

We listen to children and take them seriously, particularly if they are disclosing abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of other children.

### **Community information**

Bridgewood Primary School will keep the community up to date with child safety information. We will do this using a variety of strategies including newsletter items, special bulletins, information on the school's website, at parent information sessions, posters around the school and/or at individual parent meetings.

## **Bridgewood Primary School**

---



**Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council.**

### **Standard 2: Child Safety Policy / Statement**

---

#### **Bridgewood Primary school's commitment to child safety**

Bridgewood Primary School is committed to child safety.

- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- 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.
- Bridgewood Primary School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Bridgewood Primary School has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Bridgewood Primary School is 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 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.

### **Our children**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our 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 in school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

In particular 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.

### **Our staff and volunteers**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our 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 are important to ensure that everyone in our 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 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; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our 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 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 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>](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) for further information

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

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 and safety concerns in the Principal's office and take appropriate steps to follow up with DHHS.

### **Privacy**

All personal information 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 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 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.<sup>2</sup>
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our 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.<sup>3</sup>
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>4</sup>

### **Risk management**

---

<sup>2</sup> A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence).

<sup>3</sup> Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence).

<sup>4</sup> Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first).

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 organisations on social media).

### **Regular review**

This policy will be reviewed every four years and following significant incidents if they occur.

We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute.

Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

### **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

Our 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).



# Bridgewood Primary School

---



**Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council.**

## **Standard 3: Staff Code of Conduct**

---

**All staff, volunteers and board members of Bridgewood Primary School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.**

**All personnel of Bridgewood Primary School are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:**

- adhering to **Bridgewood Primary School's** child safety policy / statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, having a zero tolerance of discrimination
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Principal or delegate and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to the Principal or delegate
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure, as quickly as possible, that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant school activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.
- reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

### **Staff and volunteers must not:**

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps.)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes



- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family outside of our school without the Principal's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate)
- have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example providing families with e-newsletters)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the Principal or parents. All staff need to be aware of the students in their care who do not have media signed consent from parents
- work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- consume alcohol or drugs at school

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Principal or delegate of **Bridgewood Primary School**.

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

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

# Bridgewood Primary School

---



**Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council.**

## **Standard 4: Child Safety – Human Resource Practices**

---

### **Overview**

It is important for schools to have strong human resource practices to help protect children from abuse.

Bridgewood Primary School will foster a culture of openness and inclusiveness, as well as be aware that people who may wish to harm children could target specific schools. Robust human resource practices are a good way of reducing these risks. Human resource practices include the recruitment, training and supervision of all personnel.

To achieve this, Bridgewood Primary School will provide opportunities for employees and volunteers to develop and maintain skills to ensure child safety. This will support staff and volunteers to understand the importance of child safety and wellbeing, and enable them to consistently follow child safety policies and procedures.

### **Child Safety Officer**

Employees and volunteers will be supported through the Principal and/or delegate, who are the designated persons to hear or be informed about all allegations or concerns, and provide support to other personnel. This will assist Bridgewood Primary School in ensuring that child safety is prioritised and that any allegations of abuse or safety concerns are recorded and responded to consistently and in line with legal requirements, school policies / statements and procedures.

The designated persons also provide contact for children, parents and employees/volunteers to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children associated with Bridgewood Primary School.

### **Recruitment**

DET recruitment processes will be adhered to including taking all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children for have a current WWC certificate. 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 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](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)> for further information

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

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.

## **Training and Induction**

Training and education is an important tool to help people understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Employees and volunteers (in addition to parents/guardians and children) need to be supported to discuss child protection issues and to detect signs of potential child abuse.

Staff will receive induction and ongoing training. New staff will be supported and informed when they begin their new role, and existing staff might need to develop new skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of their positions and expand their career options.

Training and support also promotes an awareness of the appropriate standards of care required to be met by employees and volunteers to ensure that the school meets its duty of care when providing services to children.

It is essential that our staff commit to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, for example by signing our school's code of conduct. Training should enhance the skills and knowledge of our employees and volunteers, and reduce exposure to risks.

Employees and volunteers working with children will receive training in the following areas:

- identifying, assessing and reducing or removing child abuse risks
- understanding our policies and procedures (including the code of conduct and child safe policy)
- knowledge of legislative requirements, such as obligations to report child abuse<sup>5</sup>, reduce and remove known risks of child abuse<sup>6</sup>, and to hold Working with Children Checks<sup>7</sup> where required
- how to handle a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, including our organisation's reporting guidelines
- cultural awareness training.

Training can be formal such as:

- higher education training and accreditation
- training offered by external organisations
- training developed and delivered internally
- online 'Mandatory Reporting' unit
- induction training

Training can also be informal such as:

- inviting other professionals to speak at meetings or functions
- inviting local Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and community members to speak at meetings and events

---

<sup>5</sup> The failure to disclose criminal offence requires adults in Victoria to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so). More information about [failure to disclose](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>.

Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting obligations. Certain professionals are mandatory reporters, meaning they are required to report to the Department of Health and Human Services if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical and sexual abuse. More information about [mandatory reporting](#) is available in the *Child protection manual* <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting)>.

<sup>6</sup> The failure to protect criminal offence applies to people within organisations who knew of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so. More information about [failure to protect](#) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)>.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about [Working with Children checks](#) visit the working with children website <[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)>.

- inviting local culturally and/or linguistically diverse community members to speak at meetings and events
- internal mentoring and coaching.

### **Supervision**

Supervision of employees and volunteers will be managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. For instance, where practical, two staff members should be present during activities with children. In particular, children with a disability may require additional supervision.

As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs should be reported through appropriate channels, including the school's internal reporting procedures (such as the Principal and / or delegate), the Department of Health and Human Services (child protection), or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

### **Performance and development review**

A proactive performance development strategy will be used to improve employees and volunteers' skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse.

Performance will be measured against the school's standards of conduct and care to ensure that employees and volunteers meet expected outcomes. These standards will align with those of the code of conduct and child safe policy / statement, so everyone can be aware of the expectations of our school and appropriate behaviour.

### **Code of conduct and disciplinary procedures**

Bridgewood Primary School has a code of conduct and Student Engagement Policy that provide services for children can use which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children.

Disciplinary procedures will occur if an allegation of child abuse is made, or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.

Disciplinary procedures will be accessible and transparent, and clearly demonstrate the consequences of breaches of the code of conduct.

Employees and volunteers should be aware of reporting and disciplinary procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the school.

Members of our school community should also be made aware ( via the school fortnightly newsletter) of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions.

Bridgewood Primary School's code of conduct and Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy will be publicly available via our school website. Children and their families will be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported.

Our disciplinary procedures will clearly outline what employees or volunteers should do if they are concerned that their actions or words have been misunderstood, or they believe their concerns are not investigated in a timely manner.

# Bridgewood Primary School

---



**Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council.**

## **Standard 5: Child Protection (this needs to be read in conjunction with Mandatory Reporting Policy)**

At Bridgewood Primary School, procedures for responding to allegations of child abuse apply to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made in relation to a child, by school staff, visitors or any other person connected to our school environment. Whether a school staff member, visitor, maintenance person, contract staff member etc., each adult has a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children under their care and/or supervision from harm that is reasonably foreseeable (this applies to ALL persons connected to the school environment).

The question of what constitutes "reasonable steps" will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. In relation to suspected child abuse, reasonable steps may include (but are not necessarily be limited to):

- acting on concerns and suspicions of abuse as soon as practicable
- seeking appropriate advice or consulting with other professionals or agencies when the school staff member is unsure of what steps to take
- reporting the suspected child abuse to appropriate authorities such as the Victoria Police and DHHS Child Protection
- arranging counselling and/or other appropriate welfare support for the child providing on-going support to the child – this may include attending DHHS Child Protection Case Planning meetings
- convening regular Student Support Group meetings
- sharing information with other school based staff who will also be responsible for monitoring and providing on-going support to the child. It is particularly important for visitors and/or others associated with the school such as contractors, maintenance personnel etc. to seek out school personnel who can assist and advise regarding further steps that need to be taken.

### **NOTE: Duty of care also extends to students who are:**

- aged 17 years and over In circumstances where you suspect that a student over the age of 17 is subject to abuse you should still follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse . Although DHHS Child Protection works with children under 17, they can still be contacted with concerns relating to students 17 and over for referral and advice.
- involved in student sexual offending You have a duty of care towards all students involved in student sexual offending, including the alleged victim, assailant and any other students in the school who may have witnessed and/or been affected by the abusive behaviour.

### **Different types of abuse and recognising the possible physical and behavioural indicators of:**

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- grooming
- emotional or physiological harm
- neglect

- family violence.

**When identifying child abuse, it is critical to remember that:**

- the trauma associated with child abuse can significantly impact upon the wellbeing and development of a child
- all concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child, or the conduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer must be acted upon as soon as practicable.

**What is physical child abuse?**

Physical child abuse can consist of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. Examples of physical abuse may include beating, shaking or burning, assault with implements and female genital mutilation (FGM).

**PHYSICAL indicators of physical child abuse include (but are not limited to):**

- bruises or welts on facial areas and other areas of the body, e.g. back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs
- bruises or welts in unusual configurations, or those that look like the object used to make the injury, e.g. fingerprints, handprints, buckles, iron or teeth
- burns from boiling water, oil or flames or burns that show the shape of the object used to make them, e.g. iron, grill, cigarette
- fractures of the skull, jaw, nose and limbs (especially those not consistent with the explanation offered, or the type of injury possible at the child's age of development)
- cuts and grazes to the mouth, lips, gums, eye area, ears and external genitalia
- bald patches where hair has been pulled out
- multiple injuries, old and new
- effects of poisoning
- internal injuries.

**Behavioural indicators of physical child abuse:**

- disclosure of an injury inflicted by someone else (parent, carer or guardian), or an inconsistent or unlikely explanation or inability to remember the cause of injury
- unusual fear of physical contact with adults
- aggressive behaviour
- disproportionate reaction to events
- wearing clothes unsuitable for weather conditions to hide injuries
- wariness or fear of a parent, carer or guardian
- reluctance to go home
- no reaction or little emotion displayed when being hurt or threatened
- habitual absences from school without reasonable explanation
- overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative
- unusually nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive and destructive to self and/or others
- poor sleeping patterns, fear of the dark or nightmares and regressive behaviour, e.g. bed-wetting
- drug or alcohol misuse, suicide or self-harm.

**What is child sexual abuse?**

Child sexual abuse:

- is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity
- can include a wide range of sexual activity including fondling the child's genitals, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.

Child sexual abuse may not always include physical sexual contact (e.g. kissing or fondling a child in a sexual way, masturbation, oral sex or penetration) and can also include non-contact offences, for example:

- talking to a child in a sexually explicit way
- sending sexual messages or emails to a child
- exposing a sexual body part to a child
- forcing a child to watch a sexual act (including showing pornography to a child)
- having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner (including child sexual exploitation).

Child sexual abuse does not always involve force. In some circumstances a child may be manipulated into believing that they have brought the abuse on themselves, or that the abuse is an expression of love, through a process of grooming.

#### Who is most at risk of child sexual abuse?

Any child can be victim to sexual abuse, however children who are vulnerable, isolated and/or have a disability are much more likely to become victim, and are disproportionately abused. Perpetrators can include (but are not limited to):

- a family member (this is known as intra family abuse and can include sibling abuse) a school staff member, coach or other carer, a peer/child 10 years or more in age\* a family friend or stranger, a person via a forced marriage (where a student is subject to a marriage without their consent, arranged for by their immediate or extended family - this constitutes a criminal offence and must be reported).

*\*Unwanted sexual behaviour toward a student by a person 10 years or over can constitute a sexual offence and is referred to as student-to-student sexual offending.*

*Please note that a child who is under 10 years of age is not considered to be capable of committing an offence. Any suspected sexual behaviours by children under 10 is referred to as problem sexual behaviour.*

#### PHYSICAL indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- injury to the genital or rectal area, e.g. bruising, bleeding, discharge, inflammation or infection
- injury to areas of the body such as breasts, buttocks or upper thighs
- discomfort in urinating or defecating
- presence of foreign bodies in the vagina and/or rectum
- sexually-transmitted diseases
- frequent urinary tract infections
- pregnancy, especially in very young adolescents
- anxiety-related illnesses, e.g. anorexia or bulimia.

#### BEHAVIOURAL indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- disclosure of sexual abuse, either directly (from the alleged victim) or indirectly (by a third person or allusion)
- persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity, e.g. excessive masturbation or rubbing genitals against adults
- drawings or descriptions in stories that are sexually explicit and not age-appropriate
- fear of home, specific places or particular adults
- poor/deteriorating relationships with adults and peers
- poor self-care or personal hygiene.
- complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea without physiological basis
- sleeping difficulties
- regressive behaviour, e.g. bed-wetting or speech loss
- depression, self-harm, drug or alcohol abuse, prostitution or attempted suicide

- sudden decline in academic performance, poor memory and concentration
- promiscuity
- wearing layers of clothing to hide injuries and bruises.

BEHAVIOURAL indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

**Family Member (adult)**

- attempts by one parent to alienate their child from the other parent
- overprotective or volatile relationship between the child and one of their parents/ family members
- reluctance by the child to be alone with one of their parents/family members.

**Family Member (sibling)**

- the child and a sibling behaving like boyfriend and girlfriend
- reluctance by the child to be alone with a sibling
- embarrassment by siblings if they are found alone together.

**School staff member, coach or other carer**

- touching a child inappropriately
- bringing up sexual material or personal disclosures into conversations with a student/s
- inappropriately contacting the student/s, e.g. calls, emails, texts, social media
- obvious or inappropriate preferential treatment of the student/s (making them feel “special”)
- giving of gifts to a student/s
- having inappropriate social boundaries, e.g. telling the potential victims about their own personal problems etc.
- offering to drive a student/s to or from school
- inviting themselves over to their homes, calling them at night
- befriending the parents themselves and making visits to their home
- undermining the child’s reputation (so that the child won’t be believed).

**What is grooming?**

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.

Sometimes it is hard to see when someone is being groomed until after they have been sexually abused, because some grooming behaviour can look like “normal” caring behaviour.

**What is online grooming?**

Online grooming is a criminal offence and occurs when an adult uses electronic communication (including social media) in a predatory fashion to try to lower a child’s inhibitions, or heighten their curiosity regarding sex, with the aim of eventually meeting them in person for the purposes of sexual activity. This can include online chats, sexting, and other interactions.

BEHAVIOURAL indicators that a child may be subject to grooming include (but are not limited to):

- developing an unusually close connection with an older person
- displaying mood changes (hyperactive, secretive, hostile, aggressive, impatient, resentful, anxious, withdrawn, depressed)
- using street/different language; copying the way the new ‘friend’ may speak; talking about the new ‘friend’ who does not belong to his/ her normal social circle
- possessing jewellery, clothing or expensive items given by the ‘friend’
- possessing large amounts of money which s/he cannot account for
- using a new mobile phone (given by the ‘friend’) excessively to make calls, videos or send text messages
- being excessively secretive about their use of communications technologies, including social media
- frequently staying out overnight, especially if the relationship is with an older person



- being dishonest about where they've been and whom they've been with
- using drugs; physical evidence includes spoons, silver foil, 'tabs', 'rocks'
- assuming a new name; being in possession of a false ID, stolen passport or driver's license provided by the 'friend' to avoid detection
- being picked up in a car by the 'friend' from home/school or 'down the street'.

### **What is emotional abuse?**

Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, and persistent coldness from a person, to the extent that the child suffers, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm to their physical or developmental health. Emotional abuse may occur with or without other forms of abuse.

#### **PHYSICAL indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):**

- speech disorders such as language delay, stuttering or selectively being mute (only speaking with certain people or in certain situations)
- delays in emotional, mental or physical development.

#### **BEHAVIOURAL indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):**

- overly compliant, passive and undemanding behaviour
- extremely demanding, aggressive and attention-seeking behaviour or anti-social and destructive behaviour
- low tolerance or frustration
- poor self-image and low self-esteem
- unexplained mood swings, depression, self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- behaviours that are not age-appropriate, e.g. overly adult, or overly infantile
- fear of failure, overly high standards, and excessive neatness
- poor social and interpersonal skills
- violent drawings or writing
- lack of positive social contact with other children.

### **What is neglect?**

Neglect includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health or physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk.

In some circumstances the neglect of a child:

- can place the child's immediate safety and development at serious risk
- may not immediately compromise the safety of the child, but is likely to result in longer term cumulative harm.

#### **PHYSICAL indicators of neglect include (but are not limited to):**

- appearing consistently dirty and unwashed
- being consistently inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
- being at risk of injury or harm due to consistent lack of adequate supervision from parents
- being consistently hungry, tired and listless
- having unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care
- having inadequate shelter and unsafe or unsanitary conditions.

#### **BEHAVIOURAL indicators of neglect include (but are not limited to):**

- gorging when food is available or inability to eat when extremely hungry
- begging for or stealing food
- appearing withdrawn, listless, pale and weak

- aggressive behaviour, irritability
- involvement in criminal activity
- little positive interaction with parent, carer or guardian
- poor socialising habits
- excessive friendliness towards strangers
- indiscriminate acts of affection
- poor, irregular or non-attendance at school
- staying at school for long hours and refusing or being reluctant to go home
- self-destructive behaviour
- taking on an adult role of caring for parent.

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

### **What is family violence?**

Family violence can include physical violence or threats, verbal abuse, emotional and physical abuse, sexual abuse and financial and social abuse.

A child's exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse. This exposure can be very harmful and may result in long-term physical, psychological and emotional trauma. Action must be taken to protect the child, and to mitigate or limit their trauma.

### **PHYSICAL indicators of family violence include (but are not limited to):**

- speech disorders
- delays in physical development
- failure to thrive (without an organic cause)
- bruises, cuts or welts on facial areas, and other parts of the body including back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs
- any bruises or welts (old or new) in unusual configurations, or those that look like the object used to make the injury (such as fingerprints, handprints, buckles, iron or teeth)
- internal injuries.

### **BEHAVIOURAL indicators of family violence include (but are not limited to):**

- violent/aggressive behaviour and language
- depression and anxiety and suicidal thoughts
- appearing nervous and withdrawn, including wariness of adults
- difficulty adjusting to change.
- psychosomatic illness
- bedwetting and sleeping disorders.
- 'acting out', such as cruelty to animals
- extremely demanding, attention-seeking behaviour
- participating in dangerous risk-taking behaviours to impress peers
- overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative behaviour
- taking on a caretaker role prematurely, trying to protect other family members
- embarrassment about family
- demonstrated fear of parents, carers or guardians, and of going home
- disengagement from school and/or poor academic outcomes
- parent-child conflict.

### **For older children and young people indicators can also include:**

- moving away/running away from home

- entering a relationship early to escape the family home
- experiencing violence in their own dating relationships
- involvement in criminal activity
- alcohol and substance abuse.

#### **Definitions of the different types of abuse – source:**

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/progress/health/protect/Pages/schidentify.aspx>

#### **How should an adult respond and what should they do?**

If physical and/or behavioural indicators leads to a suspicion that a child has or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, then you must respond as soon as practicable by following the Four Steps (described below).

#### **Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse**

If you believe that a student is **not** being abused, but you still hold concerns for their safety or wellbeing, refer to advice about Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Child (see below) to determine who to consult with, when to make a report and when to engage other wellbeing professionals. Regardless of the suspected cause, all concerns about the wellbeing of a child should be taken seriously and acted upon. This includes concerns about the wellbeing of a child, which do not appear to be the result of abuse.

You should make a referral to **Child FIRST** if:

- you have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- your concerns have a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- the child's immediate safety is not compromised
- you/your school has discussed the referral with the family and they are supportive of it.

You **must** contact **Victoria Police** if:

- there is any concern for a child's immediate safety and/or
- a child is partaking in any risk taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child.

You should contact **DHHS Child Protection** if:

- after consideration of all of available information you form a view that the child is in need of protection
- you believe that the child's parent/carers will not be open to support from family services to address their child's wellbeing.

If you are unsure whether to take action, or what action to take you should discuss this with the Principal and/or Child Safe Leader and make contact with authorities for further advice.

The Principal, Assistant Principal and/or Child Safe Leader are responsible for:-

- promptly **managing** the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously.
- Responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse. The support of the child/children affected needs to be ongoing with a follow up support plan put in place.
- **monitoring** overall school compliance with the school's response to incidents procedures.
- managing an alternative procedure for responding to an allegation or disclosure if the person allocated responsibility under **Ministerial Order clause 11 (3)**

**(c) (i) i.e. promptly managing the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously;** cannot perform his or her role. Fulfilling these roles and responsibilities contained in the procedure, the Principal, Assistant Principal or Child Safe Leader does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

If physical and/or behavioural indicators lead you to suspect that a child has or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, you must respond as soon as practicable, by following these four key steps:

The response to incidents model is as follows:

**FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS**  
**Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse**

**PROTECT** THE EDUCATION STATE VICTORIA

**YOU MUST TAKE ACTION**  
 As a school staff member you play a critical role in protecting children in your care.

- You must act, by following the 4 critical actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You must act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (eg. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- You must use the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

\*A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

- 1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY**  
 If there is no risk of immediate harm go to Action 2.  
 If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:
  - separating alleged victims and others involved
  - administering first aid
  - calling 000 for urgent medical aid/ or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
  - identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.
 Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.
- 2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES**  
 As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.  
 Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?  
**WITHIN THE SCHOOL**
  - VICTORIA POLICE**  
 You must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police.  
 You must also report internally to:
    - GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS - School Principal and/ or leadership team
    - EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH - DET Security Services Unit
    - CATHOLIC SCHOOLS - School Principal and/ or leadership team
    - Diocesan education office
    - INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS - School Principal and/ or school chairperson
  - DHHS CHILD PROTECTION**  
 You must report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:
    - in need of protection from child abuse
    - at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.
  - VICTORIA POLICE**  
 You must also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.**WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY**  
 You must also report internally to:
  - GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**  
 You must also report to:
    - School Principal and/ or leadership team
    - DET Security Services Unit
  - CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**  
 You must also report to:
    - School Principal and/ or leadership team
    - Diocesan education office
  - INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**  
 You must also report to:
    - School Principal and/ or chairperson
 If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.
- 3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS**  
 Your Principal must consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:
  - not to contact the parents/ carer (eg. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/ carer to be contacted)
  - to contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).**CONTACT**
  - DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA**
    - North Division 1300 664 8777
    - South Division 1300 665 796
    - East Division 1300 360 391
    - West Division (Rural) 1800 076 599
    - West Division (Metro) 1300 664 8777
  - DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT** (03) 9589 6266
  - STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT** (03) 9627 2934
  - EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH** (03) 9627 2695
  - DIOCESAN OFFICE**
    - Melbourne (03) 9287 0228
    - Ballarat (03) 6327 7135
    - Sale (03) 6422 6600
    - Sandhurst (03) 6443 2377
  - AFTER HOURS**  
 After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 1278
  - CHILD FIRST**  
 www.dhs.vic.gov.au
  - VICTORIA POLICE**  
 000 or your local police station
  - INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA** (03) 9626 7300
- 4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT**  
 Your school must provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.  
 You must follow the Four Critical Actions as any time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

All reporters who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person:

- is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse must report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or VICTORIA POLICE.
- is displaying sexually abusive behaviours and is in need of therapeutic treatment should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection.

The reporter must:

- Make a report as soon as practicable
- Make a report on each occasion that they form a belief or
- Ensure that a report has been made in instances where another mandated reporter has undertaken to make the report.

**FAILURE TO DISCLOSE OFFENCE**

**Any staff member or person associated with the school** (e.g. visitor, contractor, maintenance worker etc.) who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 **must disclose that information to police.**

Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence, unless a reasonable excuse has been formed such as:-

- information has already been reported to DHHS Child Protection.
- Fear for own or others' safety

**The offence applies to all adults** in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children.

If an adult fails to take reasonable steps to protect a child from harm and/or fails to disclose, this may amount to a criminal offence. Refer to the Dept. of Justice fact sheets on [FAILURE to Protect](#) and [Failure to DISCLOSE](#) for further information.

If you need to report a child in immediate risk or danger of a sexual offence please call Triple Zero (000).

### **FAILURE TO PROTECT OFFENCE**

The new offence provides that a person who:

- a) by reason of the position he or she occupies within a relevant organisation, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a relevant child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by a person of or over the age of 18 years who is associated with the relevant organisation; and
- b) knows that there is a substantial risk that the person will commit a sexual offence against a relevant child –

must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk.

If required, the principal (or deputy) may need to take reasonable steps to reduce or remove a known substantial risk that an adult associated with their organisation will commit a sexual offence against a child.

#### Examples could include:

- A current employee who is known to pose a risk of sexual abuse to children in the organisation should be immediately removed from contact with children and reported to appropriate authorities and investigated.
- A community member who is known to pose a risk of sexual abuse to children should not be allowed to volunteer in a role that involves direct contact with children at the organisation.
- A parent who is known to pose a risk of sexual abuse to children in a school should not be allowed to attend overnight school camps as a parent helper.
- Removing a suspected adult from child-related work pending investigation.

**Action/notification to DHHS Child Protection must occur if a 'reasonable belief' has been formed.**

**For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:**

- a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused

**A report should be made to DHHS Child Protection in circumstances where, for example:**

- the child is engaging in risk-taking behaviour
- female genital mutilation has occurred, or there is a risk of it occurring
- there is a risk to an unborn child
- a child or young person is exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours
- there are indications that a child is being groomed.

The following table describes the steps in how to make a mandatory report, to report child abuse or child protection concerns.

Step	Description
------	-------------

**In case of emergency or if a child is in immediate danger contact Triple Zero (000) or the local police station.**

Alternatively, to report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours 7 days, toll free)

1. Keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:
  - information that has led to concerns about the child's safety (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)
  - the source of this information (e.g. observation of behaviour, report from child or another person)
  - the actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with principal, report to DHHS Child Protection etc.).
2. Discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the principal or a member of the school leadership team. The individual staff member should then make their own assessment about whether they should make a report about the child or young person and to whom the report should be made.
3. Gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following information:
  - full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person
  - the details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns
  - the individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person
  - details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person, if known.

4. Make a report to the relevant agency

To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hrs 7 days, toll free)

To report concerns to DHHS Child Protection, contact your local child protection office.

5. Make a written record of the report which includes the following information:
  - the date and time of the report and a summary of what was reported
  - the name and position of the person who made the report and the person who received the report.
6. Notify relevant school staff and/or Department staff of a report to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.

7. For Victorian government schools, the allegations must be reported to the:
- principal or member of the school leadership team
  - Department's Security Services Unit on (03) 9589 6266
  - relevant Regional Office (where applicable, the Koori support officer is to be notified)
  - Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487.

In the case of international students, the principal must notify the International Education Division on (03) 9637 2990 to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student.

8. This table describes the potential consequences of making a report.

## Potential consequence

### Description

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or parent of the report.
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed.
- a Court or Tribunal decides that it necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- a Court or Tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to provide evidence.

### Confidentiality

If a report is made in good faith:

- it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter.
- the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.

### Professional Protection

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the school without the parent's knowledge or consent. Interviewing children and young people at school should only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the best interests of the child to proceed in this manner.

### Interviews

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the principal or a member of the leadership team of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.

When officers from DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police come to the school premises, the principal or a member of the leadership team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.

### Support for the child or young person

When a child or young person is being interviewed by DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, school staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the child or young person.

The roles and responsibilities of staff members in supporting children who are involved with DHHS Child Protection may include the following:

- acting as a support person for the child or young person
- attending DHHS Child Protection case planning meetings
- observing and monitoring the child's behaviour
- liaising with professionals.

### **Requests for Information**

DHHS Child Protection and/or Child FIRST and/or Victoria Police may request information about the child or family for the purpose of investigating a report and assessing the risk to the child or young person.

In certain circumstances, DHHS Child Protection can also direct school staff and Department staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the child. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DHHS Child Protection. for more information see: [Requests for Information About Students](#)

### **Witness Summons**

If DHHS Child Protection makes a Protection Application in the Children's Court of Victoria, any party to the application may issue a Witness Summons to produce documents and/or to give evidence in the proceedings.

In certain circumstances, the Department offers [Counselling Assistance Payments to former students](#) who report having been sexually abused while attending, or in connection with, a Victorian government school.

Schools that receive a report of sexual abuse from a former student should contact the Department's Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637 2934.

### **Responding to suspected child abuse: for Victorian schools**

School staff should use the template below to document any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. This document should be used in conjunction with the following:

#### **4 Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.**

Whilst you may need to gather the information to make a report, remember it is not the role of school staff to investigate abuse, leave this to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection.

### **Recording and retaining the record**

The Principal, Assistant Principal and/or Child Safe Leader will ensure the **record of the allegation and the school's response to it is made secure and retained**. It is a requirement under *Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools* for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

The aim is to provide as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any reports and may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of Court proceedings. These notes may assist later if required to provide evidence to support any decisions.



## Resources

- o DET website: Related Legislation –
  - ✓ *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
  - ✓ *Crimes Act 1958*
  - ✓ *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
  - ✓ *Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001*



## Standard 5: Incident Report

All incident reports must be stored securely.

### Incident details

<b>Date of incident:</b>	
<b>Time of incident:</b>	
<b>Location of incident:</b>	
<b>Name(s) of child/children involved:</b>	
<b>Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:</b>	

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

### Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

*(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)*

No  Yes, Aboriginal  Yes, Torres Strait Islander

### Please categorise the incident

Physical violence

Sexual offence

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious neglect

### Please describe the incident

<b>When did it take place?</b>	
<b>Who was involved?</b>	
<b>What did you see?</b>	
<b>Other information</b>	

**Parent/carer/child use**

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

**Office use:**

Date incident report received:	
Staff member managing incident:	
Follow-up date:	
Incident ref. number:	

**Has the incident been reported?**

Child protection	
Police	
Another third party (please specify):	

**Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?**

*(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)*

Yes  No



## Standard 5: Procedures for Responding to Complaints and Misconduct

---

Guidelines for Managing Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance in the Teaching Service.

Website – <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/conduct.aspx>

When there is a complaint the above publication will be used and steps followed as mandated by DET.

Complaints against an employee may arise from:

- unprofessional conduct and/or unsatisfactory performance
- allegations of aggressive, demeaning or uncooperative behaviour
- a particular incident
- allegations of unlawful discrimination (for example, discrimination on the ground of a protected attribute such as race, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender, family responsibilities) or racial or religious vilification
- allegations of unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment
- allegations of bullying, as defined by the Victorian WorkCover Authority
- decisions made, or not made, by the principal/manager that a complainant believes are unfair, unreasonable or inappropriate.

The principal/manager must ensure that a complaint is dealt with in a way that is both procedurally and substantively fair.

It is important that all steps in the complaints process are documented.

The principal/manager can provide advice regarding the process for making a complaint.



## **Standard 5: Procedures when a disclosure is made**

---

### **If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you**

- Try to separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Make a dated file note of the information.
- Let the child use its own words to explain what has occurred and document as the information is shared.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, 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, specific people in your organisation, or other organisations who have responsibility for keeping students safe.
- 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 your manager or your organisation's child safety officer/champion,<sup>8</sup> 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 we have 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 and/or delegate, 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.

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 <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities)>.

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

---

<sup>8</sup> A child safety officer/champion is a person in your organisation who has knowledge of child safety issues, and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. You could consider including child safety officer/champion duties in the person's job description.



**Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council.**

**Standard 6: Risk Management Approach See attached risk assessment table (Landscaped document)**

---

## **Description**

Bridgewood Primary School has adopted a risk management approach which will identify and consider our student's safety risk(s) based on a range of factors including the nature of our activities with children, physical and online environments and the characteristics of children to whom we provide services. This covers both 'business as usual' risks and risks posed by specific activities such as excursions and overnight trips. Where risks are identified, Bridgewood Primary School will employ measures to reduce or remove them.

## **Rationale**

Bridgewood Primary School has an active approach to our duty of care in protecting children and have a risk management approach and a commitment to continuous improvement. Additionally, the implementation of our risk management approach is recognition of Bridgewood Primary School's legal responsibilities to ensure the safety of children.

## **How will Bridgewood Primary School implement the 'Risk Management' approach-**

- School Council will oversee that all staff ensure clear and accessible processes for evaluating risks posed by situations and activities appropriate to the organisation, its size and resources, physical and online environments, and the characteristics of the children to whom it provides services.
- School Council will ensure, as part of the policy review and the annual school review cycle, that Key Improvement Strategies in the School Strategic Plan (Wellbeing) are revised and the processes conducted as expected.
- School Council will ensure annual training of School Council members in: individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing risk of child abuse; child abuse risks in the school environment and school's current child safety standards.
- An annual risk assessment will be completed taking into account all visiting educators, community and facility personnel regarding the safety of students on the school site, including in classrooms, in out of hours care and in the early learning centre
- Develop, record and communicate clear processes for removing risks to children (for example, rules on online communications included in the code of conduct, removing staff or volunteers who may pose a risk).
- Online cyber safety training for students across the school.
- Provide relevant staff and volunteers with training in identifying child abuse risks, for example blocked-off/out-of-sight spaces (especially rooms with doors that can be locked), overnight stays, and opportunities for physical contact, such as sports coaching and personal care.
- Engage methods for continual improvement in how risks are managed by learning from past lessons, including policy review and staff training.
- Ensure training and supervision requirements for staff and volunteers who work with children.
- Institute processes for periodic review of risk management approaches and/or processes and following any incidents.

- Recognise and adapt to the needs of particular children and communities, including Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with a disability. For example, acknowledgement that greater staff or volunteer to child ratios may be needed for some children with a disability.
- Recognise and address risks to Aboriginal children which might exist because of their experiences, for example if a child does not feel safe identifying as Aboriginal, or if there is an inadequate response to self-identification.
- Recognise and address risks to children with a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, which might exist because of their experiences, for example increased communication with families may be necessary to build trust and understanding of organisational activities.
- Recognise and address risks for children with a disability, for example communication barriers when telling an adult they feel unsafe.
- Have a process for central reporting and advisory contact for staff to raise concerns and get advice about what to do if they need to report suspected abuse, the Principal, Assistant Principal or Welfare Officer.
- Include statements about shared responsibility for management of risks in all position descriptions.
- Have a consistent risk management approach across all areas of the school
- Include discussion about apparent risks or 'near misses' in staff and team meetings and areas for improvement.
- Roster staff with appropriate experience and qualifications to manage high risk environments such as the Welfare Room

**Successfully implementing this approach should result in Bridgewood Primary School being a place where:**

- situational risks are considered and understood by all staff
- steps are put in place to reduce risks where possible risk management approaches are regularly reflected on and improved
- specific risks to Aboriginal children are identified, assessed and mitigated
- specific risks to children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background are identified, assessed and mitigated
- specific risks to children with a disability are identified, assessed and mitigated



**Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council. School council will monitor and oversee the compliance requirements of this policy for the school.**

### **Standard 7: Promote participation and empowerment of children**

---

#### **Description**

**Bridgewood Primary School** ensures children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. **Bridgewood Primary School** has simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety.

All staff have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child abuse.

How Bridgewood Primary School promotes participation and empowerment of children:

We provide children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to injure them and how they can raise concerns about abuse. Information is included in welcome packs, information sessions and posters as well as on websites and social media. We have 'Life Education' van visit the school annually, their programs include safety for students' issues.

- We ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children.

For Example: through the school chaplain, principal class, teachers and ES staff. The Welfare Room is accessed regularly by students with issues and where concerns are more serious referrals are made to DHHS or other agencies such as Connections.

- We have access to professionals to translate information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages.
- The school has DBT in Schools psychologist services who support students and their families with social/emotional and family support
- We reference our school's Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy to ensure consistency in the implementation of strategies that promote safe and sensible behaviour, respectfulness towards others and resilience. DET's curriculum advice provides the basis for teaching programs and experiences that build healthy and respectful relationships amongst children.
- We gather feedback from children, for example SATS survey, focus groups, circle time and social media, about whether they would feel safe and taken seriously if they were to raise concerns, and we then implement improvements based on this feedback.
- The Leader in Me program Lighthouse team provides student voice for decision making
- Students feedback through school council information about events that they have engaged with at school.
- We enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe policies, reporting and response procedures, and acknowledge and act upon these where possible. For example, views are gathered through suggestion boxes, feedback sessions, emails or online.
- We ensure services are accessible for people with a disability, for example provide appropriate communication aids such as hearing loops, provide access to DET psych / Speech specialists, outsource specific cases to agencies – Futures in Mind, Growing Minds, Family Life, DHHS, etc.
- We ensure Aboriginal children are accepted when identifying as Aboriginal, and that staff and volunteers would understand appropriate responses to children identifying as Aboriginal. We work closely with the Koorie educator through DET and have our own designated Koorie contact at school.



- Encourage participation and empowerment of children in other organisational activities, such as organisational planning and decision making. For example – Student Leadership positions, assembly presentations, Student Leadership Conferences, student forums, Student Lighthouse Team.
- We raise awareness in the community about children’s rights, through staff conversations with families and communications such as websites, newsletters, Information Evenings, Parent Teacher meetings, School Council, etc.

**By successfully implementing these strategies Bridgewood Primary School ensures:**

- reporting procedures for when a child feels unsafe are accessible for all children
- children understand what child abuse is, and their rights (age appropriate)
- children understand how to report an allegation of abuse or concern for their safety to the organisation, a trusted adult and external bodies (for example, the police)
- children feel safe, empowered and taken seriously if they raise concerns
- children feel empowered to contribute to the organisation’s understanding and treatment of child safety
- childrens’ reports of concern are responded to appropriately
- staff understand how to empower children and encourage their participation.