

Standard 1 – Good Leadership & Governance

29 April 2019



Good Leadership & Governance in a Child Safe School

The Virtual School Victoria (VSV) is Victoria's major provider of distance education learning programs from Foundation to Year 12. VSV provides innovative 21st century learning in a safe, stimulating and supportive environment that engages all students and encourages them in the pursuit of excellence and the achievement of individual goals. The school believes that all students can learn and be extended. The learning programs are designed to meet the educational needs of students whose circumstances prevent them from accessing courses at regular schools.

VSV teachers strive to be outstanding educators who are compassionate and committed to continuously improving their practice to engage and create positive learning outcomes for all students. Respect, empathy, collaboration and growth provide a values framework for a focus on students and student learning. Students commit to doing their best and communicating openly about their learning. Parents/carers and supervisors commit to supporting the student in their learning and communicating regularly with teachers. We all share a commitment to and responsibility for ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all children and young people.

Leadership in a Child Safe Environment

VSV will act to protect children and young people from abuse, and build an environment where children and young people feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. We do this by providing a culture of child safety embedded throughout our school so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. This culture will be achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours of the VSV.

Our child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. At VSV, we foster a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children, young people and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

All staff and contractors must consider the safety of all children and young people and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people, cultural safety for children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the safety of LGBTI children and young people, and the safety of children and young people with a disability.

Governance in a Child Safe Environment

Leadership at the VSV takes a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our school is of paramount consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices.

The VSV Advisory Board are:

- Fully committed to child safety (i.e. zero tolerance of child abuse in any form).
- Ensuring that child safety is a standing item for discussion at meetings of the VSV Advisory Board.
- Developing and enhancing child safety strategies through ongoing review of the effectiveness of practice.
- Ensuring that an appropriate reporting process is in place for child abuse that includes overseeing outcomes.
- Overseeing the implementation and improvement of child safety strategies.
- Communicating with the school community about the school's child safety strategies and their implementation.
- Ensuring that the school will report on child safety in its annual report.

Leadership Responsibilities

Leadership at the VSV is responsible for embedding a culture of child safety, including the use of the tools provided by the Department of Education and Training (DET). The leadership team takes the lead in protecting children and young people from abuse, are aware of child abuse allegations, risks, and takes responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

VSV will ensure that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police by calling 000 and/or child protection by calling 13 12 78.

Identify and Analyse Risk of Abuse

VSV adopts an approach to prevent, detect and respond to child abuse risks. This includes a risk management strategy and policy that sets out how our school identifies, assesses, and takes steps to reduce or remove child abuse risks.

In its commitment to the Child Safe Standards, VSV has:

Developed a Child Safe Policy

This Child Safe Policy outlines our commitment to promoting wellbeing and protecting children and young people from abuse.

Developed a Code of Conduct

Teachers are regulated by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) under the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct. The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) developed the Code of Conduct as required by Part 2.6 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. The Code of Conduct is a set of principles or standards for the behaviour and conduct of all Victorian teachers in the Victorian Government Teaching Service and the non-Government sector. The Code of Conduct is underpinned by the DET's Values of responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership, and human rights. The VSV endorses all of the principles within the VIT Code of Conduct.

In 2018, the VSV school community embarked on a journey to review and refine our values in the context of further developing our school culture. Our agreed values are respect, empathy, collaboration and growth. The agreed global values guide appropriate behaviours between different stakeholders within various contexts.

The Student Engagement Policy at the VSV includes the rights and responsibilities for students, which encourages appropriate behaviour between students.

Chosen Suitable Employees and Volunteers

VSV takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children and young people. Alongside the DET recruitment processes, it will ensure it includes:

- Selection criteria in job descriptions
- Police record and identity checks
- Working with Children Checks where required
- Face-to-face interviews
- Detailed reference checks from previous employers, including from the applicant's most recent employer (Principal or Line Manager).

Supported, Trained, Supervised and Enhanced Performance

VSV ensures that volunteers, contractors and employees who work with children and young people have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to help protect children and young people from abuse. In particular, the Principal and the leadership team understand their responsibilities. The leadership team at the VSV has knowledge of child safety issues and is a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of abuse.

Promote Inclusion

VSV is inclusive to all children and young people and their families/carers. In particular, establishes a culture that supports:

- cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people, for example by working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations
- cultural safety for children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, for example by using inclusive language and images in policy documents, and on communications such as the website and newsletters
- the physical and emotional safety of LGBTI children and young people, for example by implementing the practices as recommended by the Safe Schools.
- the safety of children and young people with a disability, for example by ensuring that VSV is accessible to everyone and ensuring appropriate training and supervision of staff and volunteers working with children and young people with a disability.

Empower and Promote the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-Making

VSV promotes the involvement and participation of children and young people in developing and maintaining child safe environments. VSV provides opportunities for children and young people to express their views through our Student Voice and Leadership Team, and then incorporate this feedback to improve our policies and practices. Ideas from children and young people are sought through a range of different mechanisms.

VSV endeavors to listen to children and young people and take their ideas or concerns seriously, particularly if they are disclosing abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of other children and young people.

Further Information

Further information on Child Safe Standards can be found at:

Department of Education -

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/chilsafestandards.aspx>

PROTECT –

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx?Redirect=1>

Recording your actions: responding to suspected child abuse -

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Schooltemplate.pdf

Health and Human Services – <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/child-safe-standards>

Commission for Children and Young People - <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/>



VIRTUAL SCHOOL VICTORIA