

# Standard 2 - Child Safe Policy

18<sup>th</sup> February 2020



# Our commitment to Child Safety

The Virtual School Victoria (VSV) is committed to the safety of children and young people. We want children and young people to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people.

We are fully committed to child safety (i.e. have zero tolerance of child abuse). All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child or young person's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.

Our school has vigorous human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and is committed to regularly training and educating our staff on child abuse risks.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people, the cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, the physical and emotional safety of LGBTI students, and to providing a safe environment for children and young people with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team and staff to achieve these commitments.

## Aims for our Children and Young People

This policy is intended to empower children and young people 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 support diversity and tolerance in our school and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- encourage the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and young people
- encourage the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promote the physical and emotional safety participation, and empowerment of LGBTI children and young people
- ensure that children and young people with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

## For our staff

This policy guides our staff on how to behave with children and young people in our school. All of our staff must agree to uphold the rights and responsibilities of teachers in the VSV Student Engagement policy, and the VIT Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children and young people. All staff, as well as children and young people and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the rights and responsibilities within the policy.

Respect, empathy, collaboration and growth provide a values framework that guides appropriate behaviours between different individuals within various contexts.

## Implementation: Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff (in addition to parents/carers and children and young people) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse during VSV Wellbeing Induction. Further information on identifying and responding to child abuse is available at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/identify.aspx>

We also support our staff through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to promote the diversity and tolerance of all of the individuals in our school.

New employees 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 and young people from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children and young people is safe and appropriate. 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 and young people. 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 we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We welcome applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTI and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, 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.

Our employment agencies and we carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. The VIT registration process includes the process for a police record check for teaching staff. We retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process, a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

All external contractors are sourced through SAMS4Schools. SAM4Schools is a secure, online Risk and Compliance Management System that benefits schools and their providers of on-site goods or services (POGS) / contractors. Their system provides the framework to establish and maintain an up-to-date Compliance Register for every provider of on-site goods or services (POGS) and contractors to a school. This enables the VSV to meet its workplace obligations and comply with current legislation, while providing their legal duty of care. <https://www.sam4schools.com.au/>

## Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our Student Services Referral system, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and young people and families on progress and any actions we as a school take.

## Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, parents/carers or children and young people, 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. Privacy information is reviewed annually and provided to students and parents/carers in the VSV Enrolment Handbook.

## 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.
- **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
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

## Risk Management

In Victoria, schools are required to protect children and young people when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect on the previous page). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and young people. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical and online environments. The professional relationship developed by the Learning Advisor with students in their group is vital.

## Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children and young people, families/carers, staff 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 on the previous page).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

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

## Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually and in accordance with our policy review schedule.

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](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+young+people+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children and young people+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+young+people+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>.

Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the

[Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+young+people+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children and young people+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+young+people+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)>

For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](#)

[www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/ data/assets/word doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards overview.doc](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)



# VIRTUAL SCHOOL VICTORIA