



This policy is required and informed by section 8 of Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools. All Victorian schools must have a Child Safety Policy or statement of commitment to child safety under Child Safe Standard 2.

Purpose

Brunswick North West's Child Safety Policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors at the school, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

The policy will apply to the school environment, including:

- A campus of the school,
- Online school environments (including email and intranet systems), and
- Other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events).

The policy covers both school hours and outside of school hours.

Definitions

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence, or
 - grooming; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.



School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- a minister of religion.

Statement of commitment to child safety and child safety principles

Brunswick North West Primary School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Brunswick North West Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability and children who are vulnerable.

Every person involved in Brunswick North West Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations Brunswick North West Primary School will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;



9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

A child safe culture

Brunswick North West Primary School's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, the school's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online through our school website and in hard copy from the front office for all staff and students to read at any time.

As part of Brunswick North West Primary School's child safe culture, **school leadership** will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings and staff meetings;
- Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse;
- Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegation.

As part of Brunswick North West Primary School's child safe culture, **school teaching and leadership staff** are required to:

- Complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year
- Read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. **All school staff** are required to:

- Act in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) where necessary
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations (more information at https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf), including:
 - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
 - Duty of care (applies to all school staff)



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to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, and registered doctors and nurses)

- Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
- Reportable conduct obligations (applies to school leadership roles)
- Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation).

Roles and responsibilities

Preventing child abuse is everyone's responsibility. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Specific child safety responsibilities:

- Our Assistant Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 2 years.
- Our Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- Our Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Brunswick North West Primary School's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

The Child Safety Officer is responsible for:

Providing authoritative advice such as:

- acting as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety;
- liaising with the principal and school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety;
- leading the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion;
- providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

Raising awareness by:

- ensuring the school's policies are known and used appropriately;
- ensuring the school's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework;
- ensuring the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this;
- being alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- encouraging among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

Maintaining a current awareness of best practice by:

- keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years;
- having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so;



Is of concerns and referrals;

- ensuring each member of staff has access to and understands the school's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff;
- making sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and DET policies and guidance.

Human resources recruitment practices

Brunswick North West Primary School applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children, including:

- We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse
- All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check
- All position descriptions for jobs that involve child-connected work with our school include the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities with respect to child safety and the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety
- We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety. Job advertisements for child-connected work include a link to the school's Code of Conduct, which is publicly available on our website
- We carry out verbal reference checks with at least two referees to verify job applicants' history of and suitability for working with children. Our school also requires applicants for child-connected jobs to provide proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications.

The school's approach to human resources practices that ensure child safety can be found in our Suitability for Employment policy.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the 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, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.



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Not only will we ensure that all children are safe and supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the Principal or Assistant Principal or directly to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The school has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff must follow the school's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection/Victoria Police or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Brunswick North West Primary School will never prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Brunswick North West Primary School will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures can be found on our school website.

Risk reduction and management

Brunswick North West Primary School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Brunswick North West Primary School will ensure that it keeps, reviews and continually updates a risk assessment register, including the actions the school will take to reduce or remove the identified risks. The risk assessment register can be found on our school website.

Listening to, communicating with and empowering children

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them



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The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students at Brunswick North West Primary School to read
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- School newsletters will inform students and the school community about the school's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety.

The school will use its health and wellbeing programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

Confidentiality and privacy

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the School Privacy Policy that can be found on our school website.

Policy evaluation and review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 2 years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

The Assistant Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 2 years.

Policy created - September 2019

Policy last reviewed -



Related policies and documents

Related policies and documents include:

- BNWPS Code of Conduct
- BNWPS Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations
- BNWPS Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- BNWPS Child Safety Risk Assessment Register
- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [School Policy and Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)
- [School Policy and Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)

Rationale:

Schools have a responsibility in the prevention and reporting of child abuse and neglect. Brunswick South Primary School has developed policies and procedures to support the implementation of the mandatory reporting of child abuse. In Victoria, a child or young person is someone under 17 years of age. This Policy sets out what constitutes child abuse, who is mandated to make a notification, and the process of making a report to the Department of Human Services (Child Protection). By definition, child abuse is an act by parents or caregivers which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse includes physical injury, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

Who is Mandated to Make a Notification?

The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), section 64 (1C), states that certain professionals must report to the Department of Human Services (Child Protection Services), when in the course of their professional duty: -

- (they) form the belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents or caregiver have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from harm;- or
- the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents or caregiver have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from harm.

Specifically, the Victorian professionals mandated to report are:

- Legally qualified medical practitioners, registered nurses and members of the Victorian police force
- Primary school and secondary school teachers and principals.

The above people are referred to as *mandatory reporters*.



If, on reasonable grounds, you believe, when you have reasonable grounds, is an offence under the Mandatory Reporting amendment to the Children and Young Persons Act, and may incur a fine.

Although only *mandatory reporters* have a legal responsibility to report abuse, everyone has a moral responsibility to report all types of possible or known child abuse.

How to Make a Report to the Department of Human Services (Child Protection Services)

1) Making Observations

Individual staff members should make observations and keep notes of concerns that have led them to believe a report may be necessary. These dated notes should be recorded on the Mandatory Reporting Record Form.

These forms should be given to relevant Team Leader and stored as a cumulative record in the student's central file and/or counselling file.

2) Clarify Whether a Report to Child Protection Services is Required

A report to Department of Human Services / Child Protection is **required** when

- A teacher believes, based on reasonable grounds, that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect AND
- The child's parents or caregiver have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from such harm.

The belief and the reasonable grounds for forming that belief should be reported by an individual authorized by the School to Child Protection Services as soon as practicable. Additional reports should be made after each occasion in which there is awareness of further concerns.

It is permissible for a teacher to ask a child sufficient questions to establish a reasonable belief, but care should be taken not to ask leading questions. Once a concern has been raised the matter should be referred to appropriately trained or senior staff such as Team Leader or Principal. The role of the notifying staff member from this point forward is to continue monitoring the child of concern. It is NOT the role of the mandated notifier to take on the role of investigator.

The Principal shall not disclose to any other person, the identity, or information with potential to indicate the identity of the notifying individual without written consent from the notifier. If there is uncertainty about the need for a mandatory report to Child Protection the Team Leader or the notifier should ring the Department of Human Services for advice/secondary consultation:

Department of Human Services (DHS) Ph: 1300 655 795

3) Making a Report to Child Protection Services

If a staff member believes a report to Child Protection Services is required, the Team Leader will be notified and they will immediately consult the Principal. The notifying staff member, Team Leader or Principal will proceed with a report to Child Protection Services – ph: 1300 655 795 (business hours) or ph: 13 12 78 (after hours).

The following information will be required when making a report:



- The name, age and address of any known siblings
- Your reason for believing that the injury or behavior is the result of abuse or neglect
- Your assessment of the immediate danger to the child
- Current whereabouts of the child or young person
- Your description of the injury or behavior observed
- Any other information you have about the family

Your identity as a notifier will remain confidential unless:

- You choose to inform the child and/or family of the notification yourself
- You consent to your identity as the notifier being disclosed

4) Communication

A decision regarding who else (if anyone), should be informed, needs to be made. Parents, guardians or care givers of the alleged victim are to be contacted unless circumstances indicate this should not occur. Staff members are encouraged to discuss this with the Duty Worker when they make the notification. The need for confidentiality should be remembered at all times in the interest of the child and family. Only where the welfare of the child will be affected should the matter be discussed with anyone else.

If, following a report, a family approaches the School, they should be politely directed to speak with someone from the Leadership Team. Individual teachers should not engage in discussion with parents or others without the presence (or the express authorisation) of the respective Head of Campus as a minimum.

Even where senior management representatives meet with parents or others in regard to a report, it is recommended that an interview be conducted with a minimum of two designated school staff members present.

The focus of such a meeting should be on the welfare of the child, not on justifying the actions or perceptions of the staff involved.

5) Support

It is essential that reports are managed in a caring, supportive and confidential manner. Support for the responding staff member and the student who is the cause for concern as well as anyone else affected should be arranged. Staff will be provided with regular awareness on mandatory reporting and protection of children education.

6) Monitoring

After notification to Child Protection Services is made, a senior protective worker will decide whether or not further investigation is required. The notifying staff member will be advised of this decision. If the notifying staff member is not advised, the Team Leader may contact Child Protection Services and request information about what action is proposed. Any information provided at any stage of the process shall also be shared with the Principal in a timely manner.

7) Document Control, Protection of Individuals and Confidentiality of Information



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○ should be no detailed communication with alleged perpetrators or any other students involved until after approval from Victoria Police. Police and Child Protection Services are to be the investigating body at all times.

Further Information

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's *Student Safety section* also includes information on child protection and mandatory reporting.