



# Eastern Ranges School

## Autism Spectrum Disorder

56 Dorset Road, Ferntree Gully 3156 | PO Box 400, Ferntree Gully 3156

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## CHILD SAFE POLICY

### PURPOSE

On 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act, 2015, to introduce child safe standards into law. The standards aim to promote cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

The Child Safe Policy sets out Eastern Ranges 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 regardless of whether they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy applies across the broad spectrum of school activities, including those that occur outside of normal school hours.

### AIM

Every person involved in Eastern Ranges 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 their actions and decision-making.

### DEFINITIONS FROM MINISTERIAL ORDER 870

***Child abuse:*** includes:

- any act committed against a child, involving:
  - a sexual offence, or
  - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Grooming)
- the infliction on a child of:
  - physical violence
  - serious emotional or psychological harm

- serious neglect of a child

**Child-connected work:** 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:** 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:** 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:** 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

## GOOD LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Child Safe Standards require all organisations that provide services for children to have strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including effective leadership arrangements. Protecting children is everyone's responsibility, and an organisation's leadership is essential to instilling a child safety culture. Leadership must take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety issues.

At Eastern Ranges School, the Principal or their nominee will act as the child safety officer.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Eastern Ranges School will implement the Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students in the school. Eastern Ranges School will promote an organisational culture that manages the risk of child abuse and neglect through widespread understanding and compliance of the seven standards set out below:

### **Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, through effective leadership arrangements**

The Principal Class Officers will lead the implementation of the Child Safe Policy at Eastern Ranges School. Within their scope of practice, they will:

- Provide authoritative advice, leading the development of the school's child safety culture.

- Raise awareness, ensuring the school's policies are known and used appropriately and that families are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Encourage a culture of vigilance and proactivity with regard to identifying key risk indicators.
- Keep skills up to date with appropriate training, including the annual completion of the online module for Mandatory Reporting.
- Have an awareness of, and participate in (as necessary) processes and procedures with regards to outside agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
- Ensure detailed, accurate records are kept secure.
- Ensure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines.

**Standard 2: A Child Safe Policy or statement of commitment to child safety**

Please refer to Appendix A: Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

**Standard 3: A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children**

Please refer to Appendix B: Child Safety Code of Conduct

**Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel**

Eastern Ranges School acknowledges that training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is the responsibility of everyone.

All staff engaged in child related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a current Working With Children Check or hold Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

All future positions descriptions will include the *Child Safe environments* clause as provided in the 'Recruitments in School's Guide', and applicants will be informed of their role in implementing the school's Child Safe policy.

Every effort will be made to establish the identity, credentials and history of applicants when recruiting and selecting staff.

New employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand Eastern Ranges School's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as ensuring that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and Victoria Police in accordance with Mandatory Reporting guidelines.

### **Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse**

Eastern Ranges School takes all allegations and reports of abuse seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to align their practice with DET Mandatory Reporting guidelines.

Eastern Ranges School will respond to any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused by following the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse* as detailed by DET.

Where a belief has been formed that, while a child is not subject to abuse but there are significant concerns for his / her well-being, a report will be made to Child First.

Clear and comprehensive notes will be recorded on the *Responding to Suspected Child Abuse* template of all reports made to Child First or Child Protection.

Referrals will be made to other supporting agencies where appropriate.

### **Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse**

Eastern Ranges School takes a risk management approach to all school activities. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we will proactively identify and manage risks of abuse to our students.

We will implement programs empowering our students to recognise and avoid potential unsafe situations, and undertake risk assessments of activities and environments to identify potential risks to children.

Awareness of child safety processes and procedures will be embedded in role descriptions.

At no time will staff:

- prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to an appropriate person or organisation external to the school
- state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authority of the allegation
- require staff to make a judgement about the truth of the allegation of child abuse
- prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

### **Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children**

Eastern Ranges School acknowledges that empowering students to have a voice encourages engagement and supports the development of resilience and positive self-esteem. The school will continue to implement practices that develop trusting relationships and value students' participation in decision-making where appropriate.

Student agency is encouraged through participation in the Primary and Secondary Student Representative Council (SRC), leadership positions including school captain, SRC captain, year level captain, and student representatives at School Council two meetings each year.

The therapy team supports students to engage with, and access, the curriculum.

## COMMUNICATION

Eastern Ranges School leadership is required to inform the school community about their arrangements to meet the Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870. The school community is defined as:

- The School Council
- Staff
- Parents / Carers and families
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors

The school community will be informed of the strategies to embed a culture of safety at Eastern Ranges School via:

- the school website
- the fortnightly newsletter
- community member involvement in policy writing and review
- information manual for staff, families and volunteers
- induction process for staff, volunteers and contractors.

## RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015:

[http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/web\\_notes/ldms/pubdocs\\_arch.nsf/5da7442d8f61e92bca256de50013d008/ca257cca00177a46ca257ee40013d5e6/\\$FILE/581078exi1.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/web_notes/ldms/pubdocs_arch.nsf/5da7442d8f61e92bca256de50013d008/ca257cca00177a46ca257ee40013d5e6/$FILE/581078exi1.pdf)

Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005:

[http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/LTObject\\_Store/ltojst10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/F0EDCDF8366CFA41CA2582410080158A/\\$FILE/05-83aa023%20authorised.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/ltojst10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/F0EDCDF8366CFA41CA2582410080158A/$FILE/05-83aa023%20authorised.pdf)

School Policy & Advisory Guide:

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

Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse:

[https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions\\_ChildAbuse.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf)

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template:

[https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT\\_Responding\\_TemplateSchools.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Responding_TemplateSchools.pdf)

## REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last approved by school council in June 2019 and is scheduled for review in June 2020.



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### APPENDIX A:

#### Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Eastern Ranges School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people and has a zero tolerance approach to child abuse. The rights of young people are considered when decisions are made that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In our planning, decision making and operations, Eastern Ranges 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 or 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 are supported with alternative communication methods to express their concerns 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;
10. value the input of, and communicate regularly, with families and carers.



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### APPENDIX B:

## Child Safety Code of Conduct

Eastern Ranges School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, DET policy, school policies and procedures, and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and School Leaders of Eastern Ranges School will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly school environments. The Principal and school leaders of Eastern Ranges School will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps, community access and social events, as well as the use of digital technology and social media.

### Acceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- treating all students and families in the school community with respect, both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling that they or another child has been abused, or that they are worried about their safety / the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership and / or police, Child First and Child Protection as mandated by law

- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

### **Unacceptable behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work, ***we must not:***

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private channels, including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc., except where that communication is reasonable in relation to school work or where there is a safety concern
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy (Photographing, Filming and Recording Students Policy), or where required for duty of care purposes
- consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances in the school environment, or at other school events where students are present.