



Eastern Ranges School

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CHILD SAFE POLICY

PURPOSE

On 26th 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/pubpdocs_arch.nsf/5da7442d8f61e92bca256de50013d008/ca257cca00177a46ca257ee40013d5e6/\\$FILE/581078exi1.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/web_notes/ldms/pubpdocs_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/ltobjst10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/F0EDCDF8366CFA41CA2582410080158A/\\$FILE/05-83aa023%20authorised.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/ltobjst10.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

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template:

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 October 2020 and is scheduled for review in October 2021.