



Policy - Child Safety Standards

Epping Primary School

Purpose

Epping Primary School is committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. Epping Primary School is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. In accordance with Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools, Epping Primary School must and will take action to manage and reduce the risk of child abuse.

Everyone working at Epping Primary School is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse. Epping Primary School will consider and address child abuse situations and risks in an integrated and proactive fashion.

Policy Statement

Epping Primary School will:

1. Facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Epping Primary School.
2. Work towards an organisational culture of child safety that takes into account the diversity of all children, including the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and vulnerable children.
3. Prevent child abuse within Epping Primary School.
4. Advise all parties of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. Provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. Provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. Provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Implementation

Strategies to embed a child safe culture

Epping Primary School's culture encourages staff, students, parents and the school community 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 [EPS Code of Conduct](#), the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures [EPS Reporting Obligations](#), [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online and in hard copy at the school's reception for all staff and students to read at any time.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. As part of Epping Primary School's child safe culture, **school mandatory reporting 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 Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

- Read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of Epping Primary School's child safe culture, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school councils and school council members** will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings. Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards.
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the [CSS Training Power Point](#).
- Approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes.
- When hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the principal).

School Leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- Education Committee is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy 3 years.
- The School Welfare Officer is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach School Welfare Officer if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Principal or delegate is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Epping Primary School's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

Recruitment

Epping Primary School follows the Department's Recruitment in Schools guide to ensure child safe recruitment practices, available on the [Department's website](#).

All prospective volunteers are required to maintain a valid Working with Children Check to comply with our school's Volunteers Policy, including in relation to assessing the suitability of prospective volunteers and obtaining checks required under this 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 coming forward with any allegations or suspicions 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. This training occurs annually or more often as required.

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 and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children. New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the school, including by being referred to the Child Safety Policy (this document), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website.

They will also be 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 by school staff to the Principal or Assistant Principal and will be managed in accordance with Epping Primary School's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures [Reporting Obligations](#) where required.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The school has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers (including homestay providers) in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff (including school council employees) must follow the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) 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 DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/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.

Epping 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 Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Epping Primary School will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures can be found at [Reporting Obligations](#)

Risk reduction and management

Epping Primary School believes the well-being of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school's risk assessment register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventive 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.

Epping Primary School monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions it takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety, more information can be found in the school's risk assessment register.

Listening to, communicating with and empowering children

Epping School has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parent/s/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parent/s/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. Students can access information on how to report abuse at the school reception and Student Welfare Officer's office.

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 and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/ or their parents/ carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

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 and parents at Epping Primary School to read at the school's reception and on the school's website
- 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
- Classroom teachers engaging in age-appropriate discussion of child safety with students, students making and displaying their own child safety posters,
- Child safety posters are written in child-friendly language or a language other than English that is relevant to our school community
- The Four Critical Actions are actively taught to mandatory reporters and other school staff, the whole school is encouraged to contribute to risk assessment and mitigation.

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.

The school provides the following

- Respectful Relationships,
- sexuality education,
- e-smart education programs
- Social and Emotional Learning Program
- School Counsellors.

Communications

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are available on the school website
- Once per term reminders in the school newsletter of our school's commitment to child safety
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion
- Communicating child safety strategies at school tours with prospective parents, at parent information sessions or in class, volunteer induction processes, and
- By placing posters throughout the school.

Confidentiality and privacy

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law and other relevant laws. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the Department of Education and Training's [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect

or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) The child is in need of protection,
- (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",
- (c) The parents/carers are unable or unwilling to protect the child

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused, and/or
- e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Related policies and documents

Related policies and documents include:

- Code of Conduct [EPS Code of Conduct](#)
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures [Reporting Obligations](#)
- 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](#)
- [Policy and Advisory Library – Duty of Care](#)
- [Policy and Advisory Library – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

Policy evaluation and review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 3 years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.