

INTRODUCTION

This Child Safe Policy sets out our school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe. It provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards to ensure the care, safety and wellbeing of all students in our school.

The Child Safe Policy applies to all staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people, across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

Statement of Commitment

- Kensington Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.
- Kensington Primary School is 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 consideration is given 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.
- Every person involved in Kensington Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays 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.

Principles

We have a moral and legal responsibility to create a school environment where children are respected, their voices heard and they are safe and feel safe. In its planning, decision-making and operations, staff at Kensington Primary School will:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children.
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount.
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children.
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development.
- 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.
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities.
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Students

We empower the children in our school and 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 promote diversity and tolerance and welcome people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our Staff and Volunteers

We have clear expectations for our staff and volunteers about how to behave with children in our school. All of our staff and visitors must agree to abide by our **Code of Conduct** which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct. (Refer to KPS Visitors Policy).

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 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; and 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.

New employees and volunteers 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 from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children 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. 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 and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a current Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

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. We do 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.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children 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 **Incident Reporting Form**, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored in the Principal's Office.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children 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, visitors or children, 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. (Refer to KPS Privacy Policy)

Legislative Responsibilities

We take 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: Staff 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. All Staff must respond to any allegation of child abuse following the Four Critical Actions as mandated by DET.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks. These include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or visitors are to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Allegations, Concerns, Complaints

Our staff will take all allegations seriously and we have practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure that all children, families, staff and visitors 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.

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 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 the suspicious behaviour.

RELEVANT RESOURCES

- **KPS Visitor Policy**
- **KPS Child Safe Code of Conduct**
- **FOUR Critical Actions for Schools - DET Document**
 - Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and suspicions of Child Abuse
- **Incident Report Template for Victorian Schools**
 - Responding to Suspected Child Abuse
- **KPS School staff selection, supervision and management practices for a child-safe environment**

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families, children and community members have the opportunity to contribute.

This Policy was approved by Kensington School Council Date: November 2016