

# CHILD PROTECTION & SAFETY POLICY

Mount Pleasant Primary School has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse. It is designed to be communicated through our public website as well as through other mediums such as newsletters and in induction and welcome packs for School Council members, staff and volunteers

## Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence.

Mount Pleasant Primary School is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

At Mount Pleasant Primary School we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

## Child Safe Principles

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse:

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers\*, third party contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all School Council members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

*\*Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers that are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.*

*Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in school camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities*

## Objectives

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the School;
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the School; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria

## Definitions

### Bullying:

Repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Bullying may involve cyberbullying, which refers to bullying through information and communication technologies. Conflict or fights between equals and single incidents are not defined as bullying. (Safe Schools Hub, 2015)

### Child Abuse:

Any non-accidental behaviour by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e. neglect) and commission (i.e. abuse). Child abuse is commonly divided into five main subtypes: physical abuse; emotional maltreatment; neglect; sexual abuse; and the witnessing of family violence. (Safe Schools Hub, 2015)

### Child Neglect:

The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. This can be:

- physical neglect, i.e. lack of safety, cleanliness, adequate clothing, housing, food and health care;
- emotional neglect, i.e. a lack of caregiver warmth, nurturance, encouragement and support;
- educational neglect, i.e. failure to provide appropriate educational opportunities for the child; and
- environmental neglect, i.e. failure to ensure environmental safety, opportunities and resources. (Safe Schools Hub, 2015)

### Child Physical Abuse:

Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour. (Safe Schools Hub, 2015)

### Child Protection:

Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm. (Safe Schools Hub, 2015)

### Child Sexual Abuse:

Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can also be:

- Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher). The age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated.
- Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member is always sexual abuse regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion.
- Sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion.

- Non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse. (Safe Schools Hub, 2015)

### **Mandatory Reporting:**

The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners. (Safe Schools Hub, 2015)

### **Child Protection Program**

Mount Pleasant Primary School is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated

We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening School Council members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers;
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child protection training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous improvement and review

As a part of Mount Pleasant Primary School's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program

All staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and School Council members are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors and external education providers are supported and supervised by the School's Child Protection Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child protection.

### **Responsibilities**

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Mount Pleasant Primary School all members of the School Council and staff, as well as direct and indirect volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

#### **a) School Council**

Each member of the School Council is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and School Executive accountable for effective implementation

#### **b) The Principal**

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the School's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the School

### **c) Student Management Co-ordinator**

Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

### **d) Staff Members**

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

### **e) Direct Contact Volunteers**

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

### **f) Indirect Contact Volunteers**

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'indirect volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. Indirect contact volunteers are not responsible for supervising students and would not have "unsupervised" contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

All indirect volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All indirect volunteers are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with School functions, or the School canteen and fundraising barbeques.

### **g) Third Party Contractors**

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All service providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

The School only uses third party contractors that have undergone an extensive due diligence process which includes provision of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct

### **h) External Education Providers**

An external education provider is any organisation that the School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School.

The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

All external education providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All external education providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Mount Pleasant Primary School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the external education provider.

## **Reporting Concerns**

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for members of the School Council, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Protection Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Third party contractors, external education providers, indirect contact volunteers, students, parents/guardians or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

Our Child Protection Officers may be contacted via the Main School Reception on 9811 0200.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis" and all Personal Information will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Privacy Policy.

**Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.**

### **Related Policies and Procedures**

- Risk Management Program
- Compliance Program
- Human Resources Program
- Student Duty of Care Program
- Occupational Health & Safety program
- Child Protection Staff Training
- Recruitment & Selection Procedures
- Induction Program

### **Policy & Program Review**

Mount Pleasant Primary School is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in September 2016
---