



## CHILD SAFE POLICY

### **PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

The child safe environments policy sets out the Queenscliff Primary 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.

The school's strategies take into account the diversity of the children attending the school, and their particular vulnerabilities. For example, children with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

This policy applies to all school environments (inclusive of physical and online environments).

### **SCOPE & AUDIENCE**

- This policy outlines a range of preventative, proactive strategies that promote a shared responsibility to develop an open and aware culture of child safety.
- This policy will apply to all staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.
- This policy will apply across the range of school forums (e.g. camps, online, MARC) and outside of school hours (where school activities have been organised).
- All partner organisations (eg. After School Care, Community Gardens, Toy Library etc.) will be made aware of the policy and the school's underlying philosophy towards the care of children.

### **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT & PRINCIPLES**

The Queenscliff Primary School Statement of Commitment is:

- *Queenscliff Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.*
- *Queenscliff Primary School has **zero tolerance for child abuse**.*
- *Queenscliff 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 attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.*
- *Every person involved in Queenscliff 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.*

In addition, the Statement of Commitment *Queenscliff Primary School* has principles for child safety.

“In its planning, decision-making and operations *Queenscliff 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.”

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Our Community (2016) *Child Protection Toolkit: What every not-for-profit organisation must do now*.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES - IMPLEMENTATION**

Procedures and Guidelines outlining Queenscliff Primary School’s approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below.

### **CHILD SAFE STANDARDS**

#### **1. A Child-Safe Culture**

- Embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in schools.
- Organisational culture can be defined as a set of values, expectations and standards that influence the behaviour of the members of an organisation.
- The organisational culture defines what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by people within the organisation.
- To successfully embed a culture of child safety, a commitment to **zero tolerance of child abuse** is led by the school council. This commitment is shared, openly and transparently, by all members of the school community, including staff (including school employees, contractors and volunteers), parents and families, visitors and children.
- The Queenscliff Primary School community is informed about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities.
- The school’s expectations with respect to child safety are published and displayed in prominent locations in all school environments. For example, school buildings, website and school documentation.
- The school’s culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

- Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct
- The principal, student wellbeing coordinator and the business manager will lead the management of the child safe standards at Queenscliff Primary School.

## 2. Human Resources Practises and Training

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 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 (please refer to the **Code of Conduct** –Appendix 2 on page 9) to understand appropriate behaviour further). 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.

- School staff (including contractors and volunteers), are inducted/trained in the school's child safety strategies.
- The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.
- Visitors to the school are made aware of the schools expectations regarding child safety.

## 3. Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers 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 it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Our school takes 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:** People of authority in our organisation 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.
- The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection 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. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.
  - 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<sup>1</sup>, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

#### 4. Risk Reduction and Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. 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, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

- The School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes.
- The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

#### 5. Listening to Children

- The children at Queenscliff Primary School are encouraged to openly discuss any concerns related to child safety.
- The children informed about child abuse, the forms it can take, preventative strategies and how to report any occurrences (eg-Kids Matter, Wise Child, Brave Hearts programs).
- The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/care givers. We encourage child and parent/ care giver involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/care givers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.
- 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 of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parent/carer) informed about progress.

#### 6. Confidentiality and Privacy

- This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian Privacy Law. The principles regulating the collection, use and

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 5 on page 14 of this document.

storage of information is included in the Department of Education Privacy Policy (see Appendix 8 for a link to this policy).

- All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents 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.

#### **POLICY EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school review cycle or of the legislative changes occur and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute.

Date Ratified at School Council: 7/9/2016

Reviewed: Feb 2017

Feb 2018

Next Review Date: February 2019

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-implementation>