

Quality Rural Education!

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Mount Blowhard Primary School **CHILD SAFE POLICY**

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, our school will abide by the seven Child Safety Standards as listed below.

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Our Commitment To Child Safety

Mount Blowhard Primary School is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We 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 have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust procedures outlined in this policy and in our Child Safety Code of Conduct. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Mount Blowhard Primary School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. Mount Blowhard Primary School has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Our staff and volunteers

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

The Principal or a designated senior staff member will fulfil the role of the Child Safety Officer. The Child Safety Officer is to ensure that all staff are given regular professional development around the child safe standards throughout the year.

Staff document folders are to contain the Child Safe Policy and attachments and the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational 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 ensure our staff are able 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 and supported to ensure they understand Mount Blowhard Primary 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 our Code of Conduct 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.

All staff will complete the DEECD eLearning module 'Protecting Children' annually. This module covers information related to identifying and responding to child abuse.

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. Mount Blowhard Primary School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, 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 Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

We carry out reference checks and police record checks during recruitment. 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 and we will seek advice from the DEEDC.

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.

Privacy

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.

Legislative responsibilities

1. Duty of care

School staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care they should take immediate action.

In the case of a child who may be in need of protection or therapeutic treatment, or where there are significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child, school staff can discharge this duty of care by taking action which includes the following:

- reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and keeping written records of this;
- notifying the Principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns and again keeping written records.

2. Failure to disclose

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 immediately. This is the law.

3. Failure to protect

Any **staff member in a position of authority**, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence. The offence applies only to **adults in a position of authority** within an organisation, including Principals, senior school staff, regional directors and other senior managers.

4. **Mandatory reporters**, who form a 'reasonable belief' that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.

Mandatory reporters: teachers, Principals, Doctors, Nurses, Police Officers

All other school staff members who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person:

- is in need of protection, should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.
- is displaying sexually abusive behaviours and is in need of therapeutic treatment should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection.

If staff have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person they should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.

In cases where staff have concerns about a child or young person, they should also discuss their concerns with the principal or a member of the school leadership team.

	Duty of Care	Mandatory Reporter	Failure to Disclose	Failure to Protect
Parents	No	No	Yes	No
ES, volunteers, canteen, office staff	Yes	No	Yes	No
Teachers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Principals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Forming a 'reasonable belief'

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 child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- 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
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Types of child abuse and indicators of harm

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing.

Types of child abuse include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- medical neglect
- family violence
- human trafficking (including forced marriage)
- sexual exploitation (including pornography and prostitution).

A report should also be made to DHHS Child Protection in circumstances where, for example:

- the child is engaging in risk-taking behaviour
- female genital mutilation has occurred, or there is a risk of it occurring
- there is a risk to an unborn child
- a child or young person is exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours
- there are indications that a child is being groomed. For information see: Department of Justice and Regulation – Grooming offence.

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

Risk 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 (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Each year the school will undertake a risk management assessment and record the results in the Child Safe folder.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Mount Blowhard Primary 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 record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our Incident Reporting Form (Attachment 1). All records are securely stored. Copies of all allegations, notes and outcome statements will be kept in a locked confidential file marked, 'To Be Opened by the Principal Only.'

Evaluation: Following each incident or report

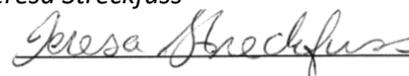
Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed every two years as part of the school's two year review cycle.

Signed: Susan Knight
Principal



Signed: Teresa Streckfuss
School Council President



This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

May 2018