## 3.10 POLICY STATEMENT: Child safe policy

**PREPARED BY: Chris Bozikas**

**REVIEWED: December 2017 (Susan Bannister)**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL: 9th August, 2016**

**PURPOSE:**

The child safe policy sets out the school’s approach to creating a child safe organisation where children are safe and feel safe, and provides the policy framework for the school’s approach to the Child Safe Standards.

**SCOPE:**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors when working in direct contact with young people; across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

**STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT & PRINCIPLES**:

Roxburgh Rise Primary School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. Roxburgh Rise Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse. Roxburgh Rise Primary school is committed to providing a child safe environment where children 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 Roxburgh Rise 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 is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety.

**POLICY & PROCEDURES:**

Policies and procedures outlining school’s approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below:

**A Child Safe Culture**

* The school’s culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

**Code of Conduct**

* School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children from abuse and neglect. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

**Legislative Responsibilities**

* Our organisation 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.[[1]](#footnote-1)
	+ **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.[[2]](#footnote-2)
	+ Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Human Resources Practices & Training**

* 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 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 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
* New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation’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.
* 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 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.

**Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint**

* 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[[4]](#footnote-4)
	+ someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
	+ observing suspicious behaviour.
* The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child who may be in need of protection (as outlined in our school’s Mandatory Reporting policy). 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. 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. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

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

**Listening to Children**

* The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children and their parents/caregivers. 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 informed about progress.

**Policy Evaluation and Review**

* To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. The review will include input from students, parents and the school community.
1. A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed. Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer%2Bcommunities/protecting%2Bchildren%2Band%2Bfamilies/failure%2Bto%2Bdisclose%2Boffence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer%2Bcommunities/protecting%2Bchildren%2Band%2Bfamilies/failure%2Bto%2Bprotect%2Boffence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

4 For example behaviour, please see [**An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards**](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)**:** <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/word\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\_overview.doc> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)