



COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

PURPOSE

At Roberts McCubbin Primary School all staff must be committed to child safety and to:

- ensure the protection of all students from child abuse
- manage the risk of child abuse
- provide support to a child at risk of child abuse
- respond to incidents or allegations of child abuse

DEFINITIONS

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Child abuse includes—

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff being: an individual working in a school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people, who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority; or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

POLICY

Roberts McCubbin Primary School will support, encourage and enable all staff, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.

At Roberts McCubbin Primary School we:

- want all children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers
- are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children
- have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures
- have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously
- are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and reducing or removing these risks
- have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers
- are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks
- support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers
- are committed to the cultural safety of Indigenous children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability
- have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments

Those responsible for managing the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse are:

- The Principal
- Assistant Principal (Student Wellbeing Leader)
- The Leadership Team (which includes Team Leaders Foundation, 1/2 , 3/4, 5/6 and specialist leader)

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants of our school. 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 promote diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- have a specific RMPS Statement of Values to promote a healthy, safe and respectful school community
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Indigenous children including an *Acknowledgment of Custodian of the Land* at school assemblies
- 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
- will provide suitable resources for education programs for the students of the school

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school.

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. 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.

All volunteers assisting with overnight events such as school camps must have a Working with Children Check. Volunteers attending school camps will be encouraged to undergo Mandatory Reporting training prior to the camp.

Volunteers assisting with Sports Days, in classrooms, excursions etc do not require a Working with Children Check.

Training and supervision

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

Programs will be offered to support staff, parents and volunteers in their understanding and commitment to child safety.

Our 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.

All staff undergo Mandatory Reporting training annually.

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 Indigenous 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 the 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 this organisation's 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.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. Our advertisements clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. We understand that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We are open to applications from suitably qualified Indigenous people, 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 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.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we take. (Subject to confidentiality and privacy)

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

Our school takes its 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
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority 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.²
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.³

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](#)

<www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

² Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](#)

<www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

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.

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, 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).

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed annually and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Indigenous communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

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 (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident.

This Policy will be reviewed by School Council on an annual basis.

Last reviewed: September 201