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## THE PATCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

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### Child Safety

Our child safe policy is publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in The Patch Primary School and demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse.

#### Our commitment to child safety

The Patch Primary School is committed to child safety.

- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We 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.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- The Patch PS is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- The Patch PS has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- The Patch PS is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety of Aboriginal children, the safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- **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 in 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 in our school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- Promote the 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.

#### Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in The Patch Primary School.

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. 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.

## **Training and supervision**

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

The culture at The Patch PS 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 safety of Aboriginal children, the 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 Patch PS'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 Patch PS Child Safety 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.
- We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities.
- The Patch PS understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- We actively 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.
- 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 as a school take.

## 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

The Patch PS 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 The Patch PS 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.

## Risk management

The Patch PS is 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 [TA1]our school on social media).

## Regular review

- This policy will be reviewed every two years 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 Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

## Allegations, concerns and complaints

The Patch PS 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. 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.

## RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

- Bullying
- Code of Conduct
- Duty of care
- Excursion/Incursion and Camps
- ICT policy and agreement
- Personal Electronic Devices
- SunSmart
- Transition
- Yard Duty
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### Related Legislation:

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Crimes Act 1958*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- *Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001*
- *Ministerial Order No. 870*
- <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>

### Department Resources:

- *A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST (PDF - 270Kb)*
- *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people*
- *Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations*

## GLOSSARY/ACRONYMS

**DET** – Department of Education and Training

**ICT** – Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

**VRQA** – Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority Framework

**Bullying** is when a person, or a group of people, deliberately upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. Bullying includes cyberbullying.

**Cyber bullying** – is when someone is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise targeted by another child, pre-teen or teen using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. It has to be a minor on both sides, or at least have been instigated by a minor against another minor.

**Cyber safety** – refers to the safe and appropriate use of the internet and ICT equipment/devices.

**Facilitator** – refers to someone who assists or helps one or more people reach a goal