

**Karingal Heights Primary School**

**Child Safe Policy**

**Rationale:**

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce child safe standards into law. The standards will commence from 1 January 2017 for most organisations working with children, with the aim of promoting cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect.

The child safe standards are part of the Victorian Government’s response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. The Betrayal of Trust Report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and in the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The child safe standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations that provide services for children so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

**Aim:**

To create and maintain a child safe organisation that aligns policy, planning and practice to the seven key Child Safe Standards.

**Implementation:**

Karingal Heights Primary School will implement the Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students at the school. We will promote an organisational culture that manages the risk of child abuse and neglect through widespread understanding and compliance of the seven standards set out 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

See: Appendix 1: Implementing the Standards

Appendix 2: Informing the school community about the Standards

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed yearly in order to meet the requirements of VRQA registration.

**Appendix 1: Implementing the Standards**

**Standard 1:**

The Principal and Assistant Principal will lead the implementation of the Child Safety Policy at Karingal Heights Primary School. Within their scope of practice, they will:

* Provide authoritative advice, leading the development of the school’s child safety culture
* Raise awareness, ensuring the school’s policies are known and used appropriately and that parents/carers are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this
* Encourage among staff a culture of listening to children
* Keep skills up to date with appropriate training every two years
* Have an awareness of and participate in (when necessary) processes and procedures with regards to outside agencies such as Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
* Ensure detailed, accurate records are kept secure
* Ensure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and Department Education and Training (DET) guidelines

**Standard 2:**

Karingal Heights Primary School is committed to child safety:

* We strive to ensure our students are safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children.
* We have zero tolerance of child abuse and neglect, and all allegations and safety concerns are treated with seriousness in alignment with our policy and procedures
* We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety which we follow rigorously
* Our school has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers
* Our school is committed to the safety of children with a disability
* Our school is committed to the safety of children from culturally diverse backgrounds including those children from indigenous backgrounds
* We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments

**Standard 3:**

The following Child Safety Code of Conduct clearly spells out professional boundaries and acceptable and unacceptable adult/child relationships and behaviours. All staff members at our school are expected to read and to adhere to the Child Safety Code of Conduct at all times.

**KARINGAL HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT**

Karingal Heights Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Karingal Heights Primary School will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Karingal Heights Primary School will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps, community access and social events as well as the use of digital technology and social media.

**Acceptable behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

* upholding the school’s statement of commitment to child safety at all times
* treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
* listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
* promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
* promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
* promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
* reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school’s leadership and/or the school’s welfare staff
* understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
* if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm

**Unacceptable behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child related work ***we must not:***

* ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse (see Child Safety Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Standards
* develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to ‘grooming’ behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
* exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
* ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
* discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental/carer guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
* treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
* communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels, including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc., except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
* photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes
* consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances in the school environment, or at other school events where students are present

**Standard 4:**

Karingal Heights Primary School acknowledges that strong human resource practices promote child safe school environments and reduce the risk of child abuse. Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is the responsibility of everyone.

* All staff engaged in child-related work, including volunteers are required to hold a current Working With Children Check or hold Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration
* All future position descriptions will include the *Child safe environments* clause as provided in the Recruitment in School’s Guide and applicants will be informed of their role in implementing the school’s child safety policy
* Every effort will be made to establish the identity, credentials and history of applicants when recruiting and selecting staff
* Karingal Heights Primary School supports its staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision, to develop their skills to protect children from abuse
* New employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand Karingal Heights’ 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 the appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services, and Victoria Police in accordance with Mandatory Reporting guidelines
* When recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action we will strive to be thorough, transparent and rely on evidence

**Standard 5**

Karingal Heights Primary School takes all allegations and reports of abuse seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to align their practice with DET Mandatory Reporting guidelines.

* Karingal Heights Primary School staff will respond to any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused by following the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse* as detailed by DET.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf>

* Where a belief has been formed that, while a child is not subject to abuse but there are significant concerns for his/her well-being, a report will be made to Child First
* Clear and comprehensive notes will be recorded on the *Responding to Suspected Child Abuse* template of all reports made to Child First or Child Protection <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/schcritical.aspx>
* All students for whom welfare concerns are raised will have a wellbeing/safety plan, (developed by the welfare team in consultation with leadership and the student’s teacher) and accurate records kept of its implementation
* Referrals will be made to other supporting agencies where appropriate

**Standard 6**

Karingal Heights Primary School takes a *risk management* approach to all school activities. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we will proactively identify and manage risks of abuse to our students. We will continue to implement programs empowering them to recognise and avoid potential unsafe situations; use a school-wide approach to positive behaviour; and undertake risk assessments of activities and environments to identify risks to child safety. These risk assessments will include identification of safety issues relating to:

* The differing age-range and abilities of students at Karingal Heights
* The ability of our students to make judgements about the safety/dangers of activities; the risks of their own and others’ behaviours; the environments they are in and the appropriateness of their social interactions with both familiar and unfamiliar people
* Specific risks associated with the Karingal Heights environment, (for example, recreation areas, personal care facilities, sheds), school activities (excursions, camps, transport) personnel (staff, visitors, volunteers, contractors)
* The safety of students who use social media, YouTube, videos/photography

In addition:

* All Risk Assessments will be communicated to staff, documented and recorded
* Strategies that mitigate the risk of abuse (for example, increase the likelihood of detection, remove triggers for inappropriate behaviour, reduce the permissibility of inappropriate behaviour) will be communicated to, and implemented by staff
* The effectiveness of the strategies will be monitored as part of the annual cycle of Risk Management assessment and communicated to School Council
* Where a risk assessment is rated as more than low, further risk mitigation strategies will be identified and implemented
* Training in Karingal Heights Primary School child safety processes will be provided to all new staff as part of their induction
* Awareness of child safety processes and procedures will be embedded in role descriptions and performance review processes

At no time will staff:

* Prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to an appropriate person external to the school
* State or imply that it is the victim’s responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation
* Require staff to make a judgement about the truth of the allegation of child abuse
* Prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse

**Standard 7**

Karingal Heights Primary School acknowledges that empowering students to have a voice encourages engagement and supports the development of resilience and positive self-esteem. The school will continue to implement practices that develop trusting relationships and value students’ participation in decision-making.

* The development of a school Induction Manual will outline how the school community develops a positive school climate, and teaches students to manage their own behaviour in a respectful and positive way. It will describe:
  + The mission and values of the school
  + The student engagement policy
  + The School-Wide Positive Behaviour program, including the KHPS rules and expectations of behaviour for all members of the school community
  + Consistent consequences for inappropriate behaviour
  + Processes for managing challenging behaviour
  + Processes for students and staff impacted by challenging behaviour
  + Processes for managing absenteeism
  + Guidelines for managing suspension and expulsion
  + Guidelines for supporting students whose welfare is at risk
  + Relevant policies
* The Cyber Safety program teaches students safe use of digital technology and social media and outlines consequences for misuse:
  + Cyber Bullying Policy
* The Wellbeing team support students and families to access services; assist students to engage with and access the curriculum and provide counselling to students, parents and carers
* Student Voice is encouraged through the Karingal Heights Primary School Student Representative Council (Student Voice).
* The Student Representative Council encourages student leadership and participation in decision-making about matters concerning student activities

**Appendix 2: Informing the School Community of the Standards**

The Karingal Heights Primary School Council is required to inform the school community about their arrangements to meet the following safety standards set out in Ministerial Order No. 870. The school community is defined as:

* The School Council
* Staff
* Parents/carers and families
* Volunteers
* Contractors
* Visitors

**Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety**

* The school community will be informed of the strategies to embed a culture of safety at Karingal Heights Primary School, the roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies and how the strategies are being put into practice via:
  + The Karingal Heights website
  + A standing item on meeting agendas as appropriate
  + Through involving community members in policy review of policy
  + The Karingal Heights Information Manuals for staff, parents and carers

**Standard 2&3: A Child Safety Policy of Commitment to Child Safety and a Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children**

* The Karingal Heights Primary School Council will publish the school’s child safety policy and code of conduct on the school’s website and ensure the community is aware that:
  + Child safety is the responsibility of the whole school community
  + Karingal Heights has zero tolerance of any abuse of children
  + Staff will receive training and support to carry out their responsibilities under the standards
  + Volunteers will receive information about the school’s child safety policy and a copy of the code of conduct as part of their induction
  + The Karingal Heights Code of Conduct for Child Safety will be incorporated into the induction manual for staff, parents/carers and contractors working at the school
  + A sign will be posted at the entrance to the school advertising Karingal Heights as a child safe school, with zero tolerance of child abuse

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

* The Karingal Heights Mandatory Reporting Policy will be published on the school’s website and copies made available on request at the office

**Related Policies**

* Child Safety Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Standards
* Duty of Care Policy
* Code of Conduct

This policy was last ratified by School Council on August 8, 2018 and will be reviewed in 2019.