

## CHILD SAFETY



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the office on 9547 1224

### PURPOSE

The Athol Road Primary School Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety of students across all areas of our work.

### SCOPE

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

### DEFINITIONS

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority
- student
- volunteer

### STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Athol Road Primary School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families. Staff are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

Athol Road Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children.

In planning, decision-making and operations, Athol Road Primary School will:

- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
- when child safety concerns are raised or identified, will take proactive steps to identify and manage the risk of harm to students by treating these seriously and responding promptly and thoroughly.
- promote positive relationships, based on trust and respect, between students and adults and between students and their peers

- give particular attention to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia are not tolerated at our school and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.
- value and empower children to participate in decisions that affect their lives
- foster a culture of openness that supports all people to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
- provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
- ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
- report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety of children is at risk
- value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers
- build partnerships with relevant organisations and health professionals to support safety practices
- regularly review our child safe practices and seek input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

The school commits to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **School leadership team**

Our school leadership team (comprising the principal, assistant principal and leading teacher) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and assistant principals will:

- ensure effective child safety governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

### **School staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#) including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

### **School Council**

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community

- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings to ensure that a culture of child safety is being embedded and school council members are informed and understand the issues
- undertake annual training on child safety, using the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with, the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. School council has delegated employment duties to the principal who is bound by this policy.

### **SPECIFIC STAFF CHILD SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Athol Road Primary School assistant principal has been nominated as student wellbeing officer to support the principal to implement the school's child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#).

The principal and assistant principal are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

The principal and assistant principal are responsible for: monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach them if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available

Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Voice Council on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Voice Council provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

The OHS Working Party monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

### **CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT**

The school's Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

The school ensures that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

### **MANAGING RISKS TO CHILD SAFETY**

The school identifies, assesses and manages risks to child safety in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety policies, procedures and practices and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team, in collaboration with the OHS nominee and OHS rep, will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register annually or more often, should it be required.

### **ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

Athol Road Primary School is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

The school considers how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, staff recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

The school has developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Staff participate in the Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST). New staff members complete this training each year.
- The school had assigned an Indigenous Perspectives School Coordinator who liaises with staff to support the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into the teaching and learning. She also liaises with the DET Koorie Engagement Support Officer to ensure that all events are being carried out with sensitivity and understanding of culture.
- A central bank of resources has been created that supports the inclusion of Indigenous Perspectives and is accessible to all staff.
- All students are explicitly taught about the history and culture of Australia's First Peoples.
- Traditional Owners are acknowledged during assemblies and group meetings.
- There are multiple displays around the school celebrating the history and culture of Australia's First Peoples.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are displayed in the hall and flown on flagpoles at the front of the school.
- Important dates relevant to Indigenous history are acknowledged and celebrated, such as NAIDOC week, Reconciliation week and Sorry Day.

All staff work collaboratively to ensure that all cultures are included and respected.

### **STUDENT EMPOWERMENT**

To support child safety at Athol Road Primary School, staff work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and strong friendships and peer support in the school are encouraged to ensure a sense of belonging through implementation of our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct, our school values.

Students are informed of their rights through our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships which gives them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. Staff ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and they are encouraged to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns from the office or on the school website.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, staff will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

### **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, staff are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety.

The school creates opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement through the parent portal, school website, newsletters, other communications, school council, student, staff, and parent meetings etc.

All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents through:

- School website [insert webpage link]
- School newsletters
- Special notices

Families and the school community will be informed about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes and strategies or initiatives taken to ensure student safety.

PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed in all learning spaces and across the school

## **DIVERSITY AND EQUITY**

As a child safe organisation, Athol Road Primary School celebrates the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promotes respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

Staff recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

Staff pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) provides more information about the measures the school has in place to support diversity and equity.

## **SUITABLE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Athol Road Primary School applies robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

### **Staff recruitment**

When recruiting staff, the school follows the Department of Education and Training's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

[Recruitment in Schools](#)

[Suitability for Employment Checks](#)

[School Council Employment](#)

[Contractor OHS Management.](#)

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, the school:

- sights, verifies and records the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collects and records:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - the person's history of working with children
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
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### **Staff induction**

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child safety Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- any other child safety information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

### **Ongoing supervision and management of staff**

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by engagement in:

- Observations
- Coaching and mentoring
- Challenge and Feedback
- Performance reviews

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety will be paramount.

### **Suitability of volunteers**

All volunteers are required to comply with our [Volunteers Policy](#), which describes how the assesses the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety induction and training, and supervision and management.

### **CHILD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS**

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety matters.

In addition to the child safety induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

### **SCHOOL COUNCIL TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety risks in our school environment
- Athol Road Primary School child safety policies, procedures, codes and practices

### **COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES**

Athol Road Primary School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

The school has clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's [Complaint Policy](#).

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees) must follow our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#). Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, our school will follow:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) and [Bullying Prevention Policy](#) cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Athol Road Primary School is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety policies are available on our website including the Child Safety Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT posters in learning spaces and around the school
- updates in our school newsletter and on the parent portal
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

### **PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

At Athol Road Primary School collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

### **RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

The school acknowledges that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

### **REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES**

At Athol Road Primary School, processes have been established for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices. The school will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

### **RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

This Child Safety Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school [policies](#), procedures, and codes. These include our:

- [Bullying Prevention Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning Policy](#)
- [Inclusion and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Visitors Policy](#)
- [Volunteers Policy](#)

### **RELATED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES**

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

### **OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)

- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

**POLICY STATUS AND REVIEW**

The principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and.

**APPROVAL**

<b>Created date</b>	July 2022
<b>Consultation</b>	Students, staff and school community
<b>Endorsed by</b>	The Principal
<b>Endorsed on</b>	July 2022
<b>Next review date</b>	July 2024