

***Child Safe Policy***

***Aldercourt Primary School***

***Aldercourt Primary School Child Safe and Code of conduct Policy ratified by school council October 20th 2016***

**Rationale**

The child safe standards are part of the Victorian government’s response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry in the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations (2013-2014). The Betrayal of Trust report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The Victorian parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) and introduced Child Safety Standards into law. The standards will commence from 1st January 2016 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 aim to drive cultural change in organisations that provide services for children so that protecting from abuse is embedded in every thinking and practice.

**Scope**

All staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy will apply across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

**Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

Aldercourt Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making, with particular attention 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.

Aldercourt Primary School has **zero** **tolerance** for child abuse.

Aldercourt Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

Every person involved in Aldercourt Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Aldercourt Primary School will;

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety

2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives

3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children

4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount

5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children

6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development

7. 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

8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities

9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk

10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

**Actions the school will take.**

Aldercourt Primary School will demonstrate its commitment to *child safety* and monitor the school’s adherence to its *child safety* policy on an annual basis through sharing the policy with staff, casual relief teachers, volunteers, school council, and the school community. In order to:

* support, encourage and enable school staff , parents, guardians, carers and children to understand, identify, discuss and report *child safety* matters; and.
* support or assist children who disclose *child abuse*, or are otherwise linked to suspected *child abuse*.

**Will be managed by:**

* embedding [child safety strategies into daily school procedures](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html#standard-1)
* [a commitment to child safety](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html#standard-2)
* [a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html#standard-3)
* [screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html#standard-4)
* providing clear [processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html#standard-5)
* implementing [strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html#standard-6)
* developing [strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html#standard-7)

**Supervision**

* Supervision of employees and volunteers should be managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. For instance, where practical, two staff members should be present during activities with children. In particular, children with a disability may require additional supervision.
* As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers should be supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs should be reported through appropriate channels, including the school’s internal reporting procedures (such as our child safety officer/wellbeing coordinator and leadership), the Department of Health and Human Services (child protection), or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

# Performance and Development Review

* A proactive performance development strategy will be used to improve employees and volunteers skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse. Training may be through professional discussions of the Child Safety standards and or online training in Mandatory Reporting.

# Code of Conduct and Mandatory Reporting

* APS will provide all staff with a code of conduct which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children. Annually the policy and code will be reviewed and each staff member will sign the code and it will be filed on the personnel file.
* Disciplinary procedures should be used if an allegation of child abuse is not made or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.
* Employees and volunteers must be aware of reporting procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the organisation. Members of the school must be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions. A mandatory Reporting policy is attached.
* Children and their families should be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported.

**Policy and procedures**

Policies and procedures outlining Aldercourt Primary School’s approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below. For further information, please contact the school’s Principal or Assistant Principals.

**A child-safe culture**

Aldercourt Primary School’s culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

**Personnel understand their roles and expectation in responsibilities/Code**

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect.

**Staff Code of Conduct**

All staff comply with the school’s Code of Conduct. The school’s Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Refer to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Teachers Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics

**Human resources practices and 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 them. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Record checks and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

**Reporting a child safety concern or complaint**

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. 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.

**Risk reduction and management**

The school believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people 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, young people and their parents/care givers. We encourage child and parent/care giver involvement and engagement that inform safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/care givers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

**Confidentiality and Privacy**

Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of information about particular children and their families. The collection, use and storage of information is included in school policies.

**Breaches**

Breaches of Duty of Care and Mandatory Reporting Obligations are identified in the specific policies.

**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.

**Definitions**

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at

[www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe)

*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

*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.

*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 means****:*

In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

* employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)* in the government teaching service or
* employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
* a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

**Related policies and Documents**

School Policy Advisory Guide – Duty of Care

School Policy Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations

DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

**Appendix - The Child Safety Standards and School Responsibilities:**

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

**For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements**

Minimum child safety standard: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety in accordance with clause 7.

**Clause 7**

1. The ***school council*** will:
	1. develop strategies to embed a culture of ***child safety*** at the school;
	2. The Principal will nominate a Child Safety Officer( Students Welfare) and outline the duties involved in the persons job description
	3. inform the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities;
	4. put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices; and
	5. periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies.
2. The Principal will nominate a Wellbeing team to support and assist students who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
3. The Principal will inform all members of the school community of the school’s Child Safe policy.
4. The Principal will make the child Safety Officer’s (Student Welfare) contact details available to staff, parents and students.
5. The Principal will oversee the staff and volunteer recruitment practices.
6. The school’s commitment to child safety will be reflected in the vision statement and Strategic Plan.
7. Childs safety matters will be included on leadership, staff and Wellbeing Team meeting agendas.
8. The child Safe policy will be approved by school council.
9. The Annual Report will report on child safety at Aldercourt Primary School.

**Standard 2 – Commitment to Child Safety**

**For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements** Minimum child safety standard: A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety in accordance with clause 8.

**Clause 8**

Aldercourt Primary School’s Child Safe policy is an overarching document that provides an overview of key elements of the school’s approach and commitment to child safety.

Other relevant policies that guide the establishment of the child safe school both physical and online, include:

* Anti-cyber Bulling policy
* Anti-Discrimination policy
* Anti- harassment policy
* Attendance policy
* Bullying policy
* Camping policy
* Community code of conduct policy
* Computer usage and Internet agreement policy
* Confidentiality policy
* Custody policy
* Employment policy
* Excursion and school visit policy
* Incident Management procedures policy
* Mandatory reporting policy
* Mobile phone policy
* Parent helpers policy
* School community code of conduct
* Sexual harassment policy
* Student code of conduct policy
* Student teachers policy
* Visitors policy
* Work experience policy
* Yard duty policy

**Standard 3 – Code of Conduct**

**For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements**

Minimum child safety standard: A child safety code of conduct in accordance with clause 9.

**Clause 9**

1. All of Aldercourt Primary school staff and volunteers must agree to abide by the various codes of conduct and comply with the related policies listed above in standard 2.
2. The **Child Safe Code of Conduct** clearly sets out the acceptableand unacceptable adult/child relationships and behaviours.
3. Other related codes of conduct include:
4. The **Code of Conduct** sets out the behaviours and expectations of all members in the community, including the Principal, all school staff, parents, students and visitors. It respects the diversity of individuals in the school community and addresses the shared responsibilities of all members in building a safe, inclusive and respectful school community.
5. The **Victorian Teaching Professional Code of Conduct** sets out the professional standards for school staff and the associated guiding principles such as:
* Teachers provide opportunities for all students to learn
* Teachers treat their students with courtesy and dignity
* Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with students
* Teachers are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school, whether at school or not
1. The **Working with Children Policy** clearly outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours relating to child safety at Aldercourt Primary School

**Standard 4 – School Staff Selection, Supervision and Management Practices for a Child**

 **Safe Environment**

**For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements**

Minimum child safety standard: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse in accordance with clause 10.

**Clause 10**

1. In **recruiting new staff and volunteers** school leaders will:
2. Develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate Aldercourt Primary School’s commitment to child safety and an awareness of ethical and legislative obligations.
3. Request two forms of personal identification and evidence of a current Working with Children’s Check for all people engaged in child-related work.
4. Carry out thorough reference and police checks during recruitment process of staff and volunteers.
5. Conduct interviews that give insight into an applicant’s values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries.
6. In **training and supervising staff and volunteers** school leaders will:
	1. Train staff (including contractors and volunteers) in the school’s child safety strategies including identifying, assessing and minimising risk of child abuse.
	2. Supervise new staff and volunteers to ensure they understand the school’s commitment to child safety and the role they play in protecting children from abuse such as reporting through appropriate channels any inappropriate behaviour.
	3. Monitor and reassess the effectiveness of the child safety strategies, together with the Wellbeing Team.
7. The school must implement practices that enable the school council to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to ***child safety***.

**Standard 5 – Responding to Incidents, Disclosures & Suspicions of Child Abuse**

**Four Critical Actions for Schools**

**For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements**

Minimum child safety standard: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse in accordance with clause 11.

**Clause 11**

1. The Student Welfare Officer/ or OH&S Officer will familiarise all staff with the Aldercourt Primary school **Mandatory Report policy** and documenting procedures.
2. The Student Welfare Officer will ensure that all staff are up to date with the department’s Mandatory Reporting online Professional Development module.
3. The Principal will inform all new staff, whether mandated or not, they need to report to the Principal or Student Welfare Officer when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties that a child is in need of protection from physical injury, sexual abuse or other forms of abuse.
4. School leaders will record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns on **Sentral**.
5. Fair procedures for individuals involved in any incidents will be implemented and privacy will be safeguarded.
6. If a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

**Standard 6 – Risk Assessment Template**

**For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements**

Minimum child safety standard: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse in accordance with clause 12.

**Clause 12**

1. Development of Risk Assessment Template The Welfare Officer will involve all staff and selected students in completing a Risk Assessment Checklist annually
2. The risk Assessment Checklist will be reviewed in the event of an incident or breach of the Child Safety Standards.
3. The Welfare Officer will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the risk controls.
4. The Principal will ensure all new staff are informed of their obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse.

**Standard 7 – Strategies to Promote Child Empowerment and Participation**

**For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements.**

Minimum child safety standard: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment in accordance with clause 13.

**Clause 13**

1. Teachers will ensure that children feel safe to report abuse and have processes in place to ensure that students are empowered to raise child safety concerns
2. Teachers will support students to develop appropriate knowledge and skills so that they can identify and communicate when they don’t feel safe in physical and online environments Students will be made aware of internal and external support, for example Kids Helpline.
3. Teachers will involve students in decision making, especially about matters that directly affect them.
4. Teachers will educate students about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Healthy and respectful relationships and rights and responsibilities.
5. The Welfare Officer will promote the Child Safe policy in a way that is readily accessible, easy to understand and user- friendly to children.
6. The Wellbeing team will ensure the needs of all students, particularly indigenous, cultural or linguistic backgrounds through Wellbeing meetings, Student Support Group meetings, individual education plans and staged responses.

**Inclusion Principles**

In complying with the child safe standards, schools need to be mindful of the diversity of students and school communities and include the following principles as part of each standard:

* promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
* promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
* promoting the safety of children with a disability.

**Resources to support standards of behaviour for students attending Aldercourt Primary School:**

**Student Engagement Policy**

**Code of Conduct:**

**Child abuse is unacceptable. Ensuring children’s safety is a top priority for the Victorian Government.**

**What is child abuse?**

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

* a sexual offence
* a grooming offence; or
* the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect.

Our aim is to create a culture where protecting children from abuse is part of everyday thinking and practice. To strengthen existing approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse and provide for consistency in how these issues are managed. We all have a responsibility for keeping children safe.

All registered schools are required to develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school. At Aldercourt Primary we will:

* embed a culture of child safety at the school
* allocate roles and responsibilities to ensure child safe practices are adhered to
* inform the school community about the strategies being employed at the school

# What is organisational culture and how does it relate to child safety?

Embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in schools.

To successfully embed a culture of child safety, a commitment to **zero tolerance of child abuse** must be led by the school council. This commitment must be shared, openly and transparently, by all members of the school community, including staff (including school employees, contractors and volunteers), parents and families, visitors and child.

**All staff, volunteers and council members of Aldercourt Primary School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.**

**All personnel of Aldercourt Primary School are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:**

* adhering to Aldercourt Primary School’s child safe policy at all times / upholding Aldercourt Primary School’s statement of commitment to child safety at all time
* taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
* treating everyone with respect
* listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
* promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child’s self-identification)
* promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
* promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
* ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
* reporting any allegations of child abuse to Aldercourt Primary School’s Student Welfare Officer and ensure any allegation to reported to the police or child protection
* reporting any child safety concerns to Aldercourt Primary school’s Student Welfare Officer.
* if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
	+ encouraging children to ‘have a say’ and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

**Staff and volunteers must not:**

* develop any ‘special’ relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
* exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometime, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area)
* put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
* do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
* engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
* use inappropriate language in the presence of children
* express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
* discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
* have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without our child safety officer’s knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate)
* have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example providing families with e-newsletters)
	+ ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to Aldercourt Primary School Student Welfare Officer.

**NB: These procedures are not intended to:**

* prohibit or discourage school any staff from reporting an allegation of ***child abuse*** to a 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 judgment about the truth of the allegation of ***child abuse*** ; or
* prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of ***child abuse***.

In the case of an allegation of ***child abuse***, you will:

1. inform appropriate authorities about the allegation (including but not limited to mandatory reporting);
2. protect any child connected to the alleged ***child abuse*** until the allegation is resolved; and
3. make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of ***child abuse*** and the school’s response to it.
4. **phone 000 if you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse.**

**Evaluation:**

Aldercourt Primary School is committed to ensuring this policy is publicised and implemented and will regularly monitor and review its effectiveness as part of an annual review cyclei