MALDON PRIMARY SCHOOL
Excellence, Integrity, Resilience, Respect
www.maldonps.vic.edu.au

Child Safe Environment Policy

Children have a right to be safe from criminal abuse in organisations. Parents, caregivers and the community trust organisations to protect children while in their care. Children are vulnerable and dependent on adults, and organisations have a responsibility to ensure their safety.
Betrayal of Trust report 2013

What is a child safe policy?

A child safe policy is an overarching document that provides an overview of key elements of an organisation's approach to child safety. It should:

- clearly state our zero tolerance of child abuse
- detail the organisation's child safe processes and procedures
- clearly state the organisation's commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for all children and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability
- detail expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers to ensure the protection of children
- include contact details for people to access information in relation to child safety
- include how and when the policy and other child safety tools are reviewed to help organisation improve.

Statement:

Every child is unique, and needs a secure, caring and stimulating environment in which to grow. As educators, our role is to help students reach their full potential in an environment that is safe, supports risk taking and invites student voice and decision making.

Child abuse is unacceptable and ensuring children's safety is a top priority for the Victorian Government.

Creating child safe organisations is a key component of the Victorian Government's response to the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations (Betrayal of Trust Inquiry). This work is focused on strengthening organisations' approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse.

The Betrayal of Trust Inquiry found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations, there are inadequate and inconsistent approaches to child safety in child-related organisations across Victoria.

The Betrayal of Trust Inquiry provided 15 recommendations, which the government has committed to implementing, including the introduction of minimum standards for ensuring child-safe environments and an improved reporting and oversight scheme for allegations of child abuse.

Purpose:

This policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe. It provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

It is intended to empower children.

Scope:

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

Partner organisations, such as After-school Care will be made aware of the policy and the school's underlying philosophy towards the care of children. This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

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.

Definitions:

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:
1. 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 or
     - ~ serious neglect of a child.
2. Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

3. 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.
4. 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:
   - 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).
5. School staff refers to an individual working in a school environment who is:
   - directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
   - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
   - a minister of religion.

Statement of Commitment and Principles:

1. **Maldon Primary School** is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision - making.
2. **Maldon Primary School** has zero tolerance for child abuse.
3. **Maldon 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. Particular attention will be 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.
4. Every person involved in **Maldon 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.

Maldon Primary School's Principles for Child Safety.

In all planning, decision-making and operations, **Maldon Primary School** will:
- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons 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
- 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 and wellbeing of children is at risk
- Value the input of, and communicate regularly with, families and carers.

{Adapted from Our Community (2016) Child Protection Toolkit: *What every not-for-profit organisation must do now*}

Policy and Procedures:

1. A child-safe culture

The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

The school's plan for creating a child safe culture can be found in the following school policies/statements:

~ School Philosophy statement	~ Duty of Care and Student Safety
~ Statement of Values	~ First Aid Policy and Procedures
~ Student Engagement Policy	~ Incursion Policy
~ Accidents and Incidents Reporting Policy	~ Information Privacy Policy
~ Anaphylaxis Management	~ Learning Technologies Acceptable Use
~ Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy	~ Mandatory Reporting Policy
~ Attendance Policy and Procedures	~ On-site Supervision of Students Policy
~ Bus Travel Policy	~ SunSmart Policy
~ Bushfire At-Risk Status	~ Volunteer Workers in School Policy
~ Care Arrangements of Ill Students and Students with Medical Conditions	~ Working With Children Check Policy
	~ Communication of Behaviour Management
~ Critical Incident Recovery Policy and Plan	~ Classroom Behaviour Management Policy
~ Distribution of Medication Policy	~ First Aid Training Schedule (Staff)

2. **Personnel Roles and Responsibilities and Codes of Conduct**

   School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct which can be found in the Student Engagement policy.

3. **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 our children. 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 Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

   a) Training:
   ~ Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Maldon Primary School understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.
   ~ Our whole school 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.
   ~ We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, and to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal 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 our 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 (See Appendix 1)

   b) 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.
   ~ 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.

4. **Legislative responsibilities**

   At Maldon Primary School, we take 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 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
   ~ Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

   Reporting a child safety concern or complaint
   ~ At Maldon PS, we take all allegations seriously and we have 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. 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) a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
      b) behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
      c) someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
      d) observing suspicious behaviour.

5. **Risk reduction and management**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

At Maldon PS, we believe the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount and we take a risk management approach in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks. We undertake preventative measures to address such 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 at our school on social media).

6. **Listening to children**

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers.

- We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.
- We involve children 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 organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:
    - ~ promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
    - ~ 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.
- When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child the school will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.

7. **Confidentiality and Privacy**

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. 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. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the school's Information Privacy Policy.

Implementation at Maldon PS:

Our school will demonstrate our continuing commitment to child safety by:

- incorporating the Child Safe Environment Policy in ongoing staff, volunteer and contractor induction processes and maintaining records of this process
- enabling professional learning and training of staff to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse
- using the Child Safe Environment Policy to shape school procedures and practice
- ensuring regular and consistent communication which models the values and principles articulated in the Child Safe Environment Policy
- reviewing and updating the policy in response to emerging thinking, evidence and practice about the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

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

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 and adhering to the school's Child Safe Environment policy
- 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 and/or 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 Principal
- 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
- 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 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
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

This Child Safe Environment Policy was endorsed by School Council in November 2016