



Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment in reference to Ministerial Order No. 870

Our commitment to child safety

Aitken Creek Primary School (ACPS) is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

ACPS is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

ACPS has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

ACPS is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

In implementing the minimum child safety standards in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 870, we:

- (a) take account of the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable; and
- (b) make reasonable efforts to accommodate the matters referred to in clause 6(a).

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

For the purpose of this policy child abuse includes-

- (a) any act committed against a child involving
 - (i) a sexual offence; or
 - (ii) an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of-
 - (i) physical violence; or
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- (c) serious neglect of a child.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at ACPS. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds are welcome.

Our staff and volunteers

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. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision

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

Our organisational 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 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 ACPS's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

DET supports can also be found at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/protect.aspx>

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. ACPS understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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. Please see the Working with Children Check website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

ACPS takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

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

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical and online environments. Staff complete the DET Social Media Guide online module.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/bullystopmodules.aspx>

Allegations, concerns and complaints

ACPS takes all allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, school staff, visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment seriously and has practices in place to investigate. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed. <http://www.secasa.com.au/pages/age-appropriate-sexual-behaviour-guide>
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.
- DET supports can also be found at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/protect.aspx>

Evaluation

This policy was originally formed, and will be reviewed in consultation with all members of the wider community (all staff, parents, students, and interested members of the community) as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 14th March 2018

What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully ask for a wellbeing staff to be present if appropriate.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to leadership, police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern

- Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the organisation's management or Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on [communicating with people with a disability](#) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities>.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Legal responsibilities

While the child safe standards focus on organisations, every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The **failure to disclose** criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

More information about [failure to disclose](#) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

More information about [mandatory reporting](#) is available in the *Child protection manual* <www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting>.

Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](#) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

The **failure to protect** criminal offence (commenced on 1 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Further information about [failure to protect](#) can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence, and the Department of Health and Human Services website>.

Guide to Managing a Disclosure of Child Abuse

- Stay calm and control expressions of panic and shock
- State clearly that the abuse was not the child/young person's fault— no matter what the circumstances
- Always accept what the child says, no matter how fanciful it may appear to you — let them know you believe them
- Allow the child/young person to talk at their own pace, and use their own language.
- Listen attentively and only ask open-ended questions. Avoid using leading questions, and remember: **you are not investigating the allegation.**
- Do not pressure the child/young person into telling you more than they want to.
- Encourage the child/young person to talk about their concerns, as this can be helpful in dealing with difficult experiences.
- Not all the information will be necessarily expressed in one conversation or discussion.
- Tell the child/young person you are pleased they told you.
- At some point in the disclosure ensure that you inform the child or young person that you cannot offer absolute confidentiality or protection. Do not make promises that you may not be able to keep.
- Take careful notes throughout, if appropriate, or very soon after the child/young person has left. Keep to the facts, and use the words as they were spoken to you. Note date, time and place.
- You may wish to stop the interview if you think it is better handled by another person or staff member, or if it is too stressful for the child/young person.
- Avoid going over the information time and time again; you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need make a notification to Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection.
- DHS Child Protection and/or police are responsible for investigating the allegations after a notification to Child Protection has been made.
- This can be very stressful for staff involved in a disclosure with a child/young person.

Examples of Open Questions.

- “When did this happen?”
- “What did the person do?”
- “Can you tell me a bit more about that?”
- “What did the person say?”
- “Have you told anybody else about this?”
- “Where did this happen?”
- “How do you feel when this happens?”
- “Has this happened more than once?”
- “What do you mean by that?”

Guide to Managing a Disclosure of Child Abuse

- The resource “Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, a joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children’s Services and Victorian Schools (the Protocol)” is a comprehensive guide to mandatory reporting requirements that all school staff should be aware of <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/childprotection.htm>

Staff do not have to cope on their own, and that support from the school leadership team and staff is available. Support can also be accessed through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) on phone 1800 337 068.

Child Safe Risk Assessment

Risk Event	Existing Management Strategies or internal controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk assessment	New Risk management controls or internal controls	Who is responsible?	Residual Risk
Recruitment of an inappropriate person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWCC • VIT registration • Police Checks • Qualifications • Induction processes • Code of conduct 	Unlikely	Major	Low		Principal or delegate	Low
Parent Helpers/Visitors to the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWCC • Code of conduct • Never to be 1:1 with a child unless for exceptional circumstances • To be present with a teacher • To assist in an open or visible area • Where possible to be in the presence of more than one child 	Unlikely	Major	Low		Principal or delegate	Low
Contractor on school grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWCC • Code of conduct/induction • Never to be 1:1 with a child • Never be left with a child, always in the presence of another adult 	Unlikely	Major	Low		Principal or delegate	Low
Contractor off school grounds (excursion or	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never to be 1:1 with a child 	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Employ an accredited provider	Principal or delegate	Low

camp)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In exceptional circumstances in the presence of more than one child 					
Staff (ES, SSS, Allied Health Professionals, teaching) conducting 1:1 assessments/intervention programs/counselling where line of sight is not possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWCC Code of conduct/induction Professional codes and standards Employment screening process Empowering students to voice concerns if they feel unsafe 	Unlikely	Major	Medium	<p>Classroom based ES staff to only work with groups of children, preferably in shared open spaces</p> <p>Suitably qualified Wellbeing ES staff (councillor, social worker, speech therapist, psychologist) to predominantly work with groups of children. Where 1:1 is required, this work is to be carried out in the designated counselling spaces.</p>	Low



ACPS Child Safe incident report

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children¹ to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.² This report is to be used when a child, a family member or an individual makes a disclosure or an allegation of abuse or safety concern in our organisation. This report is also used to record disclosures made to staff.

All incident reports must be stored securely at the office.

Incident details (Filled in by a staff member when a disclosure occurs)

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No

Yes, Aboriginal

Yes, Torres Strait Islander

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence

Sexual offence

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious neglect

¹ For a [list of the organisations in scope](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards) for the child safe standards, please see the Department of Health and Human Services website: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards>.

² The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations, including physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect. For further explanation of the different types of child abuse, please see see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>.

Incident description (Filled in by the adult making a disclosure or a staff member. Staff member to scribe for a child and attach any other relevant documentation to this form)

When did it take place?	
Who was involved?	
What did you see? What was said to you?	
Other information	

Leadership/Office use:

Date incident report received:	
Staff member managing incident:	
Follow-up date:	
Caseworker details:	
Date of COMPAS entry:	
Date of report securely filed at the office:	

Has the incident been reported?

Child protection	
Police	
Another third party (please specify):	

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes

No

Further information

Further information on [child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services' website <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations>.

Additional resources for organisations in the child safe standards toolkit can be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards>. In particular, [An Overview to the Victorian child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc), has information to help organisations understand the requirements of each of the child safe standards, including examples of measures organisations can put in place, a self-audit tool and a glossary of key terms: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>

Registered schools can contact the Department of Education and Training: child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au

Early childhood services operating under the *National Quality Framework* or *Children's Services Act 1996* should contact: licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Licensed children's services enquiry line: 1300 307 415