

# CHILD SAFETY

Glen Park PS



2016 (Updated 2019)

## CHILD SAFETY at Glen Park PS

Children have the right to be safe and protected, including at school.

Registered schools and other child-related organisations have an important responsibility for keeping children safe. Most organisations already take steps to protect children from abuse. More can be done, however.

Child safe standards to manage the risk of child abuse in organisations are being phased in during 2016 and 2017.

Child abuse, and arrangements that allow it to occur, will not be tolerated. Victoria's children deserve nothing less.

Victoria has introduced compulsory minimum standards that will apply to organisations that provide services for children to help protect children from all forms of abuse. The child safe standards form part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry.

The child safe standards will be compulsory for all organisations in scope, but not prescriptive. This will allow the diverse range of organisations in scope some flexibility in how they implement the child safe standards to meet requirements.

### **The child safe standards**

The child safe standards are as follows:

In complying with the child safe standards, an entity to which the standards apply must 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.

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an entity to which the standards apply must have:

- Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

### **Support for organisations**

Organisations will be supported to strengthen their ability to prevent and respond to child abuse, and ongoing improvement will remain a focus of the child safe standards.

### **What does it mean in schools?**

A range of additional communication approaches should be considered to ensure that each volunteer working for the school, whether inside and outside school hours, understands their responsibilities for child safety and the school's arrangements under standard one and standard two.

These approaches may include:

- providing well-labelled advice on the website about what to expect if working with or volunteering at the school eg that volunteers are required to adhere to the child safety code of conduct
- including child safety information in volunteer and contractor advice kits available on the school website and/or in written agreements
- a paragraph relating to volunteer and contractor responsibilities placed at the top of sign-in sheets or displayed prominently by the visitor book kept by the main office
- a summary of child safety responsibilities added to printed visitor tags or, if tags are not used, a business card-sized handout of this information given to contractors and volunteers
- clear and friendly notices about contractor and volunteer responsibilities in areas they are likely to spend time in, such as the canteen, assembly hall, sports facilities and office waiting room
- developing relevant examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour eg from the *VRQA Child Safety Code of Conduct – Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour* information sheet on the school website
- including relevant child safety information in tendering and contracting information packages and volunteer induction kits
- ensuring that facilities staff and other school employees in regular contact with contractors and facility hirers have been trained to brief others about their child safety responsibilities.

### **Families**

All schools have measures in place to communicate with families of children enrolled at the school. These measures are likely to include the school website, a regular newsletter, and email databases for individual and class group messages.

Official social media accounts, family assemblies, school parent organisations, customised mobile apps and the local media may also be used to share information.

Making communications as relevant as possible to families' own children and using all the communication methods at hand on more than one occasion will maximise the chance of families receiving this important information.

Providing information in simple, plain English free of jargon helps all families to best understand your messages.

Some possible communications strategies to inform families of the school's arrangements under standard one and standard two include:

- seeking family representatives to assist in the strategy development and reviews of policies associated with the child safe standards. Later, the wider school community could be consulted about these activities via a survey before the strategies and policies are finalised
- using family databases to personally address emailed or printed letters from the Principal to each family and including the child's name in the introduction (eg 'Dear Mrs Nguyen, I am writing to tell you about some important changes that help to protect all our students, including your daughter Chloe')
- asking families to acknowledge they have read information sent to them with either a simple reply email or a tear-and-return slip on a printed letter (replies could be optional but may lead to higher value being placed on the information and the opportunity for families to pose questions)
- co-hosting a series of day and evening meetings with the school parent organisation to give all families the opportunity to hear about the standards and ask questions at a time that suits them
- adapting the examples provided in the *VRQA Child Safety Code of Conduct – Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour* information sheet to show the standards in day-to-day application within the school community
- developing a short 'then and now' summary of the differences between the school's former child protection arrangements and the new guiding materials set by the standards – this creates interest in what has changed
- creating short videos in which staff and family representatives volunteer to describe their responsibilities under the standards – students could be invited to film and conduct the interviews to increase family interest
- consulting with appropriate community members on whether the child safety strategies, policies and information is inclusive of families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and vulnerable children
- providing translations of key messages from the standards for families into one or more languages other than English, depending on the school's community.
- inviting parent representatives to join the school to approach local media about positive communication outcomes as a result of responding to the child safety standards.

## Visitors

Visitors to schools form part of the school community. Visits will include both scheduled and unannounced visits from people known and unknown to the school governing authority. Some possible communication approaches may include:

- providing well-labelled advice on the website about what to expect if visiting the school
- adding a paragraph relating to the standards and visitors' responsibilities at the top of the sign-in sheet or on prominent display next to the visitor book kept by the main office
- adding a brief summary of responsibilities to printed visitor tags or, if tags are not used, having a business card sized handout of this information for visitors and volunteers
- displaying clear and friendly notices about visitor and volunteer responsibilities in areas they are likely to frequent, such as the canteen, assembly hall, sports facilities and office waiting room.

## What Glen Park will do?

The VRQA has developed resources, including a Compliance Self-Assessment and Action Plan to help schools identify existing gaps and meet the standards by the 1st of August. We used the action plan to consider what we have already in place to:

- develop and maintain community knowledge and expertise
- record the school's commitment to zero tolerance for child abuse
- introduce a child safety code of conduct for all staff
- affect recruitment processes
- inform how volunteers and contractors are involved
- increase student knowledge and empowerment
- involve the whole school community in decisions around child safety
- Follow the school excursion/incursion checklist
- ensure timely and appropriate responses to child abuse incidents and allegations; and
- to modify, as necessary, the school's physical environment.

Where we have identified gaps in meeting the child safe standards we have marked on the **action plan** what needs to be done to address the gap, nominating responsible staff (The Principal in Glen Park's case) as well as the expected completion date.

<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafepages/resources.html?Video=preparing&#tab-standards-2>

Government schools will be emailed a compliance self-assessment and declarations on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 and we will be expected to 'certify' that we have met or are in the process of meeting the standards.

### **Identified issues to address**

*At Glen Park PS our major concerns centre around risk management procedures. Because of our size, the fact that the principal is 'front of house' for all visitors and the fact that we have few buildings and 'blind spots' makes this an matter that can be addressed promptly, confidently and with little disruption to our current practices. We have very few visitors, contractors work on weekends or school holidays and no external providers are employed or work at the school (after school care or music teachers)*

### **Issues for us to consider consist of:**

Does the risk management process consider 'hot spots' and 'hot times' of student-staff and student-student interactions with respect to child safety?

Does the school have a process that ensures child safety risks of any new or changed physical environments on and off campus are reviewed?

Does the school perform screening as part of its staff recruitment process, including for volunteers and contractors? eg WWCC's, criminal background checks, reference checks, psychometric testing etc.\*

Does the school adequately monitor who is on the premises? eg visitor and contractor sign-in process, perimeter control.

Does the risk management process consider child safety risks that may exist in the school environment before, during and after hours, as appropriate? Have we considered:

- classrooms and learning environments
- specialist facilities such as libraries, kitchens and computer, music and art rooms
- vocational education and training (VET) facilities on campus or off-site
- recreation areas, playgrounds, sporting facilities on campus and off-site
- staff workplaces and offices
- student change rooms and locker areas
- transport facilities and locations eg buses, bus stops (excluding public transport)
- excursion or camp locations

- any other school specific environments.

We do not currently have any out of school hours activities taking place at Glen Park. We have, as of 2016 suspended our camps program but still undertake an excursion program. We may consider a risk assessment process for excursions in future. (We do not want to create a lot of unnecessary paperwork)

We do not access any outside of school facilities (adjoining parks or sporting facilities.) Any instruction that takes place out of school (gymnastics and swimming) will be undertaken by trained staff at the Ballarat Aquatic Centre or DET employees at Ecolink.

### **Child Safe Code of Conduct**

**All staff, volunteers and visitors of Glen Park Primary School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.**

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

- adhering to Glen Park Primary School child safe policy at all times
- 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 Glen Park Primary School's Child Safety Officer (The Principal), and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns at Bullarto Primary School to the Child Safety Officer (The Principal)
- 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 sometimes, 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 THE GLEN PARK PS Child Safety Officer (The Principal / leadership).