



CHILD SAFE POLICY

The Victorian Government has introduced Child Safe Standards for organisations that work with children. The introduction of these standards forms part of the Government's response to the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust Report, that found that more must be done to prevent and respond to child abuse in organisations. Ministerial Order 870 for Managing the Risk of Child Abuse sets out specific actions that a school needs to take to meet child safe standards.

A child is a person under 18 years of age.

Guidelines:

The Child Safe Standards aim to:

- create a culture where protecting children from abuse is part of everyday thinking and practice in organisations.
- strengthen existing approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse and provide consistency in how these issues are managed.

The 7 Child Safe Standards

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, the organisation must have:

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

The following principles must also be embedded within each standard:

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



FCS has a commitment to upholding Child Safe Standards and does so through the provision, adherence, monitoring and management of its policies and procedures in regards to child safety and welfare.

This policy covers all kinds of child abuse, including:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming;
- physical violence against a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child
- physical abuse
- family violence

This policy applies to 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.

Strategies to embed a culture of child safety at Fitzroy Community School

To comply with Standard 1 of Ministerial Order 870, The school governing authority must

- (a) develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school
- (b) allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies
- (c) inform the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities
- (d) put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices; and
- (e) periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies

Leadership in a child safe environment to comply with the above Standard

Fitzroy Community School will act to protect children from abuse, and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged in their daily learning and development. We do this by providing a culture of child safety embedded throughout our school so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice.



Our child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. At Fitzroy Community School, we foster a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour. All staff and volunteers must consider the safety of all children, and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

Procedure for maintaining sensitivity to the diversity characteristics of the school

All child safety procedures are to be adapted in ways that respond to the diverse contexts and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community organisations, people from culturally and/ or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability. The Child Safety Leaders can discuss with the mandatory reporter how to ensure sensitivity, and will communicate this necessity.

Governance in a child safe environment

Leadership at Fitzroy Community School takes a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children in our school is of fundamental consideration in everything we do.

Leadership responsibilities

The Principal takes the lead in protecting children from abuse, and are aware of child abuse allegations and risks, and take responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

Fitzroy Community School will ensure that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.

School child safety leader role and responsibilities

The School Child Safety Leader role is the Principal, who will undertake the role and accompanying responsibilities to ensure the school embeds a culture of child safety and is compliant with Ministerial Order 870. The role includes:



- **Providing authoritative advice:**
 - Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
 - Maintain the visibility of child safety.
 - Lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.
- **Rising awareness across the school including staff, students and teachers and others who come into contact with children in the school**
 - Ensure the school's policies are known and used appropriately.
 - Ensure the school actions are reviewed as to the effectiveness of the strategies put into place and to revise accordingly.
 - Ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
 - Conduct regular briefing sessions for school staff members to ensure a high degree of awareness of the school's Child Safe Policy.
 - Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this. The policy will be uploaded onto the school's website and will be evaluated as part of the policy cycle for all school policies unless changes in the Ministerial Order dictates changes in the school's policy. The Child Safe Policy will be provided to all new families who come into the school at the time of enrolment.
 - Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers. The Child Safe Leader will be actively in communication with all teachers regarding potentially vulnerable and at risk children.
 - 'Child Safe' will be a standing item on the school board meetings to ensure the embedding a child safe culture in the school.
 - Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.
 - Work with teachers to include, where appropriate, supporting teaching points into curriculum programs
- **The child safe leader will be trained and have capabilities to support the school to embed a child safe culture being authoritative in providing advice by:**



- Keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out regularly.
- Having a working knowledge of how the Department of Families, Fairness and Health conducts a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
- Keeping detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
- Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's Child Safety Policy and procedures, especially new, part time staff and relief teachers.
- Make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest departmental policies and guidance.

Communications

Fitzroy Community School's Child Safety Leader will ensure Child Safe Policy information and procedures are available for everyone in the school community. Ways of disseminating information will include: Website, newsletters, parent meetings, staff meetings and staff emails

Chosen suitable employees and volunteers

Fitzroy Community School takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. These include:

- Selection criteria in job descriptions
- Police record and identity checks
- Working with Children Checks (as required by the Worker Screening Act 2020) where VIT registration does not cover an adult in the school
- Face-to-face interviews
- Detailed reference checks from previous employers

The FCS Recruitment and Onboarding Process is followed to ensure that these steps are taken.

Supported and trained staff

Fitzroy Community School ensures that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their knowledge and understanding is developed to help protect children from abuse.



Developed the following Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct

FCS is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of FCS will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide an inclusive, safe and orderly school and learning environment that has an embedded culture of child safety. Our vision is that members of the school community (teachers, parents, students, etc.) feel empowered to discuss child safety and raise any concerns about child abuse. The Principal and school leaders of FCS will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school excursions and in the use of digital technology and social media.

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 commitment to child safety at all times.
- 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/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 school's leadership.
- 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

Staff Requirements

- All staff are to undertake the On-Line Course – Mandatory Reporting. The course is to be repeated prior to the commencement of each new school year.

Policy Endorsement

This Policy has been endorsed by the FCS Governing Body.

Date: June 2022

Review Date: June 2023

Review Cycle. Every 12 months.

Exceptions: This Policy may be reviewed earlier than the date stated subject to circumstance.