

HAMLYN BANKS PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHILD SAFETY POLICY



Aims:

1. To embed a culture of child safety and a commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse at Hamlyn Banks Primary School.
2. To establish planning, decision-making and operations to ensure Child Safety at Hamlyn Banks Primary School.
3. To ensure the school complies with Ministerial Order No. 870 and the Child Safe Standards.

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

- strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 1: STRATEGIES TO EMBED AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY

Development of strategies to embed a culture of Child Safety at the school

1. The school fosters a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness.
2. Children, staff and school community members are informed of what to do if they observe or are subject or abuse or inappropriate behaviour.
3. Members of the school community including teachers, parents and students, are empowered to discuss child safety and raise concerns about child abuse through our Wellbeing Staff and Leadership team.
4. Child Safety is to be embedded in our school vision, mission and strategic direction as they are reviewed.
5. All staff and volunteers are supported to consider the safety of all children, including the recognition of 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.
6. The school recognises that young children and those with a disability are at greater risk of abuse of exploitation and staff will provide greater levels of supervision and support.
7. The Leadership Team, with support from the Student Welfare teacher, authorises arrangements and strategies to improve child safety practices across the school.

8. Child Safety and wellbeing conversations are a standing item at whole Staff Meetings and are scheduled termly in Professional Learning Team agendas.

Child Safety Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Key people at the school will undertake child safety roles and ensure school responsibilities are being carried out. This includes the Principal Team and Student Welfare Teacher.
2. These Child Safety roles including contact details will be clearly communicated to the school community via newsletter articles and website information.
3. We will build the child safety capacity of the school staff by making training available and ensuring online modules are completed.
4. Ongoing induction and training will be provided for all staff and volunteers in child safety, including how to recognise and respond to child abuse.
5. The Student Welfare teacher will act as the schools' Child Safety Officer and will meet weekly with the Principal.

Child Safety Officer:

The Child Safety Officer will:

a) Provide authoritative advice:

1. Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
2. Liaise with the Principal and Leadership Team to maintain the visibility of child safety.
3. 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.

b) Raise awareness:

1. Ensure the school's policies are known and used appropriately.
2. Ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
3. Ensure the child safety policy is publicly available 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.
4. Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special education needs and young carers.
5. Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

c) Professional Learning:

1. Keep their skills up to date with appropriate training.
2. Have a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required.
3. Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
4. Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff.
5. Make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and DET policies and guidance.

Put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices

1. Child safety information will be embedded in regular school communications, including the newsletter, school website, Compass and Facebook.
2. Opportunities for Community Forums such as Cybersafety with the Police Community Officer will be sought.
3. Key child safety personnel will be identified including their roles and contact details.
4. The School Community will be informed about Child Safety in all school environments including online and school camps.
5. The school will update the school community in regards to the school's progress in implementing child safety strategies into practice, changing strategies or developing new strategies.
6. Reports of progress will be forwarded to the School Council as appropriate.

Evaluation

1. Our school's child safety related policies and practices will be reviewed at least every three years or following identification of a potential risk, or a report that occurs within the school.
2. As part of their review and evaluation, the Leadership Team will consult with staff and where appropriate the wider community to inform strategic directions and practices.
3. Outcomes of the review will be reported to the Leadership Team, staff and the School Council.

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2: A CHILD SAFETY POLICY OR A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Everyone in society has a moral responsibility to keep children safe and to protect them from harm. A Statement of Commitment to child safety helps raise awareness about the importance of child safety in school and the community and affirms the organisation's commitment to child safety and expectations.

Statement:

1. Hamlyn Banks 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. Hamlyn Banks Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.
3. Hamlyn Banks 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.
4. 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 young children and those with a disability.
5. Every person involved in Hamlyn Banks Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays 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

Implementation:

In its planning, decision-making and operations Hamlyn Banks 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.

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 3: DEVELOPING A CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Hamlyn Banks Primary School 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.

Aim:

1. This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur.
2. 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.

Implementation:

1. The Principal and school leaders of Hamlyn Banks Primary School will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments.
2. The Principal and school leaders of Hamlyn Banks Primary School will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.
3. All staff, volunteers, school councillors, contractors, 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 as documented below.
4. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.
5. This code will be visible within the school community, including: school website, staff room, staff handbook. It will be included in the induction process.

Acceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, school councillors, contractors, and any other school community members involved in child-related work, 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 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 or the safety of another child.
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and 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 team and/or the child safety officer assigned.
- 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, school councillors, contractors, and any other school community members 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, religion, 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 or be under the influence of alcohol, contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 4: SCHOOL STAFF SELECTION, SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR A CHILD- SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Strong Human Resource practices promote child safe school environments and reduce the risk of child abuse. Hamlyn Banks Primary School utilises policies and procedures for recruitment, supervision, training and managing performance that support a child safe school environment.

Implementation:

1. The school will ensure that position descriptions for all new positions include the standard 'Child safe environments' clause as provided in the 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide.
2. For our existing staff, the school has promoted and will embed the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct in accordance with Standard 3.
3. As part of the selection process, the principal will implement practices to ensure satisfaction that external applicants meet the *Child Safe Standards* prior to the applicant's employment at the school.
4. When recruiting new staff or volunteers the school panels will monitor the following important child safety areas for assessment:
 - a. The applicant's motivation to work with children (personal or professional)
 - b. The applicant's relevant and verifiable child-related work experience
 - c. The applicant's understanding of professional boundaries
 - d. The applicant's communication skills.
5. As part of the selection process for non-teaching staff engaged in child-connected work, the school will collect Working With Children Checks (WWCC).
6. As part of the selection process for teachers, the principal will check the person's Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) status.
7. All selection panels will engage in a minimum of one verbal referee check to ascertain the person's history of work involving children and the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
8. The school acknowledges that certain specialist roles may present different child safety risks for the school, such as a school nurse, welfare counsellor, bus driver, sports coach, camp instructor or music teacher. At Hamlyn Banks Primary School, these specialist roles will require at least two forms of personal identification with the same name and address and may require a criminal records check and/or greater referee checks to be completed.
9. More rigorous checks may also be necessary for interstate/overseas applicants.
10. The school may complete additional background searches online and through social media.
11. The school will ensure that all new school staff are inducted into the school's policies, codes of conduct, practices and procedures governing child safety.
12. As part of the DET's Performance and Development process, school leaders will monitor and assess staff members' suitability for continuing child connected work.
13. The school's Child Safety Policies and Procedures will be evaluated, with the findings being shared with the School Council. This information will support the School Council to be satisfied that the processes and strategies in place are assuring that school staff and volunteers who engage in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety. Any concerns raised by the School Council will be appropriately addressed.
14. The Principal will liaise with Camp Australia to ensure that recruitment and supervision practices meet the standards.

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 5: RESPONDING AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

As members of a school community, we all have a moral obligation to protect any child under our care and supervision from foreseeable harm. As staff members of Hamlyn Banks Primary School, we play an especially critical role in protecting children (including identifying, responding and reporting child abuse) and we must meet a range of legal obligations to do so. To comply with our legal and moral obligations we must report any reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools:

- 1) Responding to an Emergency
- 2) Reporting to Authorities
- 3) Contacting Parents/Carers
- 4) Providing Ongoing Support.

Our Obligation to Protect Children

1. **All** school staff members have a moral and legal obligation and a Duty of Care to protect any child under their care from foreseeable harm (not just staff who are classified as mandatory reporters).
2. Every staff member must respond to any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.
3. Recent changes to Victorian legislation create additional legal obligations in relation to reporting suspected sexual child abuse. Failing to meet these obligations can constitute a criminal offence, including a:
 - failure to disclose a sexual offence
 - failure to protect a child (where it is known that a person associated with their organisation poses a substantial risk of sexually abusing children).
4. The easiest way to comply with our legal and moral obligations is to remember that **you must report any reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused.**
5. This includes abuse that has, or is suspected to have, taken place within or outside of school grounds and hours.

All school staff members have a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children under their care and supervision from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. The question of what constitutes 'reasonable steps' will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. In relation to suspected child abuse, reasonable steps may include but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Acting on concerns and suspicions of abuse as soon as practicable, seeking appropriate advice or consulting with other professionals or agencies when the school staff member is unsure of what steps to take.
2. Reporting the suspected child abuse to appropriate authorities such as the Victoria Police and DHHS Child Protection, arranging counselling and/or other appropriate welfare support for the child, providing on-going support to the child – this may include attending DHHS Child Protection Case Planning meetings, and convening regular Student Support Group meetings .

3. Sharing information with other school based staff who will also be responsible for monitoring and providing on-going support to the child.

Identifying Signs of Child Abuse

At Hamlyn Banks Primary School all staff members play a critical role in protecting children from child abuse. In some cases staff members may be the best-placed or only adult in a child's life who is in a position to identify and respond to signs that a:

- child is being abused, or is at risk of abuse
- school community member (including a school staff member) may be a perpetrator of child abuse.

At Hamlyn Banks Primary School all staff members will receive training to support them in identifying signs of Child Abuse. Members of the Leadership Team, will have higher levels of expertise and be able to act as supporters to other staff members.

There are different types of abuse and all staff are required to be able to recognise the possible [physical and behavioural indicators](#) **of:

- Physical child abuse
- Child sexual abuse
- Grooming
- Emotional child abuse
- Neglect
- Family violence

**Please be aware that these links lead to information with explicit descriptions of abuse and may be distressing to engage with for some staff members. If you need to talk to someone, it is recommended that you speak to a member of the school's Wellbeing or Leadership teams about arranging appropriate support.

You can also talk to your GP or another allied health professional. Government school staff can also contact the Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 008.

When identifying child abuse, it is critical to remember that:

- the trauma associated with child abuse can significantly impact upon the wellbeing and development of a child
- all concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child, or the conduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer must be acted upon as soon as practicable.

If physical and/or behavioural indicators lead you to suspect that a child has been or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, you must respond as soon as practicable by following the Four Steps: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.

Four Critical Actions for Schools

Staff at Hamlyn Banks Primary School must take action if they suspect a child is being abused. Staff play a critical role in protecting children in our school's care.

- Staff must act, by following the 4 critical actions, as soon as an incident is witnessed, a disclosure is received or a reasonable belief is formed that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- Staff must act if they form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if they are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- Staff must use the Responding to [Suspected Child Abuse template](#) included in this document to keep clear and comprehensive notes.
- A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

Critical Action 1 – Responding To an Emergency

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:

1. separating alleged victims and others involved
2. administering first aid
3. **calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
4. identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.
5. Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

Critical Action 2: Reporting to Authorities

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

If the source of suspected abuse is from within the school:

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- School Principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Security Services Unit

If the source of suspected abuse is from within the family or community

You **must** report to **DHHS Child Protection** if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to **Victoria Police**.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- School Principal and/or leadership team

- DET Security Services Unit

Critical Action 3: Contacting Parents/Carers

The Principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

Critical Action 4: Providing Ongoing Support

- The school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of duty of care requirements.
- Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.
- All staff **must** follow the Four Critical Actions every time they become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

Responding to other Concerns about a Child

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you must still act. Regardless of the suspected cause, all concerns about the wellbeing of a child should be taken seriously and acted upon. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support). Follow [this link](#) for further information (go to p 41: Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Child)

Staff should make a referral to Child FIRST if:

- there is significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- the concerns have a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- the child's immediate safety is not compromised
- the school has discussed the referral with the family and they are supportive of it.

Staff must contact Victoria Police if:

- there is any concern for a child's immediate safety and/or
- a child is partaking in any risk taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child.
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Responding to suspected Child Abuse Template

- School staff will use the [DET template](#) to document any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused.
- This template should be used in conjunction with the above four critical actions.
- Completing the template should not impact on reporting times. If a child is in immediate danger, school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police.
- Whilst gathering information to make a report, it is not the role of school staff to investigate abuse, leave this to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection.
- When completing this template the aim is to provide as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any reports and may be sought at a later date if the matter is the

subject of Court proceedings. These notes may also later assist staff if they are required to provide evidence to support any decisions.

- It is a requirement under **Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools** for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

Privacy and Information Sharing

School staff members are permitted to share certain information about a child who has been impacted (or is suspected to have been impacted) by abuse with:

- other staff members in order to enable staff to best support and protect that child
- an officer from DHHS Child Protection, if the information requested may be of assistance to DHHS Child Protection in their investigation of protective concerns
- Victoria Police if the information may assist in the investigation of potential criminal offences, or may aid in the immediate protection and safety of the child.

Process of Review

Complete this section between 4-6 weeks after an incident, suspicion or disclosure of abuse in conjunction with the school Leadership Team. This will support staff and the school to continue to protect children in our care and to reflect on processes and the need for any follow up actions.

Student, Parent & Staff Resources

Hamlyn Banks Primary School aims to support:

- primary students to feel safe and to seek help when they feel unsafe
- parents and carers to protect children from abuse
- staff to spot the warning signs of child abuse.

Implementation:

To support these aims, the school will provide students with appropriate curriculum based programs and make the following primary information sheet readily available.

- All staff will receive the staff child abuse information sheet as part of their introduction to the school year packs with a support presentation from members of the Wellbeing Team.
- As new staff members arrive during the year, they will receive the same information and support as part of their induction to the school.
- The parent information will be advertised through the school newsletter and via the school's website.
- All Wellbeing and Leadership Team members will keep copies of all of this information to support others

as required.

- [Feeling Safe: for Primary school students](#)
- [Protecting Children from Abuse: for Parents and Carers](#)
- [Spotting the Warning Signs of Child Abuse: for School Staff](#)

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 6: STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND REDUCE OR REMOVE RISKS OF CHILD ABUSE

A child safety risk management strategy is a formal and structured approach to managing risks associated with child safety. At Hamlyn Banks Primary School we will develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure child safety in our school environment. This document outlines how the school will manage risks, who is responsible for the process, and a description of the process itself.

Implementation:

Annually, the Leadership team will complete the following child safety risk management tasks:

- Identify the school's child safety risks across the range of school environments including excursions, swimming, camps, online, performance activities, etc.
- The team will complete a risk assessment similar to the one included in this documentation. Identify any existing risk mitigation measures and/or internal controls already in place.
- Assess and rate the school's child safety risks given the existing controls in place, taking into account the likelihood of risk, and the likely consequence of the risk.
- If the risk rating is more than the 'acceptable level', identify further risk management strategies through additional controls or other prevention, detection or mitigation strategies and then reassess the risk.
- The risk assessment will take into consideration the increased level or risk associated with some activities and the vulnerability of particular groups of young people.
- This process will be documented and shared with School Council.

The types of strategies that the school has in place or may be considered include such things as:

- Child Safety Code of Conduct for all school staff
- Child Safety reporting procedures
- Induction for new staff, volunteers, pre-service teachers and contractors
- Training for students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour
- CCTV for difficult to supervise areas or 'hot spot' areas
- Clear windows in walls to enable visibility occupants
- Assessment of new or modified physical environments for child safety risks
- Supervision and monitoring of all school activities
- Monitoring of online searching by students and staff
- Performance and development processes and procedures
- Pre-employment suitability checks as outlined in our Child Safe HR Practices document.

The types of risks that the Leadership Team will analyse include, but is not limited to:

- A culture of people not reporting issues
- Children alone with one other person unsupervised
- Recruitment of an inappropriate person
- Inappropriate behaviour not being reported
- Harassment via email, SMS or other social media
- Ad-hoc contractors on the premises for maintenance etc.
- Vulnerability of staff and students due to unknown personal details
- Unknown people and environments at excursions and/or camps
- False allegations.

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 7: STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE CHILD EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Hamlyn Banks Primary School aims to deliver appropriate education about:

- Standards of behaviour for students attending the school,
- Healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality),
- Resilience
- Child abuse awareness and prevention.

Implementation:

Student Engagement Policy and Positive Behaviour Program

The school's Student Engagement policy provides the basis for the school developing and maintaining a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.

The school clearly communicates the expectations and aspirations of the school community through the school's values and the behaviour matrices in relation to student engagement, including strategies to address bullying, school attendance and behaviour.

Hamlyn Banks Primary School actively engages with the Positive Behaviour Support program. The school has worked to develop an evidenced-based framework for preventing and responding to student behaviour. We aim to create a positive school climate, a culture of student competence and an open, responsive management system.

In line with this, the school has implemented a positive rewards ticketing system with rewards that students can attain for exhibiting behaviours that are outline on our student matrix.

Resources to Support Healthy and Respectful Relationships

- Hamlyn Banks Primary School is reviewing our Social and Emotional curriculum (P-6) in light of the new Victorian Curriculum and the [Respectful Relationships Education resources](#). Our focus will be on building positive relationships and social skills. Additionally, challenging negative attitudes such as discrimination and harassment that can lead to violence, often against women.
- The school will review the health messages being delivered within the classroom and engage with the school community for input to related policies and practices.
- Staff will be supported to best manage issues related to disclosure of personal information, giving careful consideration prior to approval for the collection of sensitive information, not promoting their own personal preferences, and selecting health education materials with care and consideration.
- Comprehensive, inclusive sexuality education is part of our school's health education curriculum, which is taught and assessed by teachers.
- The sexual health responsibilities of the school are shared with local health and welfare community providers and parents.
- Through planning our school ensures that the learning and teaching in sexuality education is developmentally appropriate.
- Hamlyn Banks Primary School supports and respects sexuality diversity including same sex attraction.
- Incursions/speakers such as Bravehearts and Community Police Program will be offered.

The school aims to build student resilience and peer support practices to promote a student's ability to look after oneself, recognise and be aware of one's needs in others, and awareness of appropriate supports in school and in the community.

The school is very active in supporting environments conducive to good mental health, and sharing appropriate resources with students to improve engagement and wellbeing outcomes.

Resources to Support Resilience

The school is working to strengthen our social and emotional learning skills and enhance the resilience of our students. We will be developing a school-wide approach based on the DET's [*Building Resilience: A model to support children and young people.*](#)

Resources to support Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention

The school is working to strengthen our curriculum in regards to teaching children about personal safety; focusing on the three key safety messages of recognise, react and report. We will aim to incorporate curriculum based on the *Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum* developed by Queensland's Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE).

USEFUL RESOURCES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Contact Details and More Information

Within the Department of Education and Training, there are a number of supports available to Victorian government schools responding to incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, including:

Security Services Unit (SSU)

The Security Services Unit provides a 24-hour communications centre for schools and Departmental staff to report a range of incidents. On receiving notification of an incident involving child abuse the Security Services Unit immediately alerts the Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU) and relevant staff within the Central and Regional Office.

Regional Offices

Principals of Victorian government schools are required to maintain on-going contact with their Regional Office throughout any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Each region has an emergency management contact/s. These officers can provide initial advice and support to Victorian government schools during and after incidents, and assists schools to minimise the effects of trauma and enhance recovery.

Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU)

The Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU) works with Victorian Government schools following incidents of a sexual nature to ensure appropriate advice and supports are in place that prioritise the health and wellbeing of the children involved. The SIRU is notified by the Security Services Unit as soon as an incident involving sexual abuse (or problem sexual behaviour) is reported.

The SIRU will:

- provide timely and appropriate advice to Victorian Government schools
- support regions and Victorian Government schools to respond to critical incidents of a sexual nature
- advise Victorian Government schools to meet their legal obligations and duty of care responsibilities
- assist Principals and senior school staff from Victorian Government schools to manage incidents of a sexual nature in a manner that ensures adverse impact on the school community is minimised
- monitor the progress of school management of such incidents
- provide advice on appropriate response measures, such as counselling and management strategies to support those involved in allegations of sexual offending or problem sexual behaviour
- provide advice on the provision of a suitable level of support to school staff and members of the school community on whom the incident has impacted

The SIRU works closely with other key agencies, such as Victoria Police SOCIT and the DHHS, and with organisations such as the Centre against Sexual Assault (CASA) to support student wellbeing in Victorian Government schools.

Student Support Services

The role of the Student Support Services (SSS) is to provide support to Victorian Government schools including:

- establishing a relationship with students and possibly their families
- providing a supportive, calm approach and acknowledging the issues raised
- clarifying the needs of the child
- evaluating the child's present strengths and resources
- evaluating possible ways of accommodating the child's identified needs, such as referral for specialist counselling and school-based supports
- documenting information and actions
- identifying the process for follow up and review
- ascertaining which intervention programs are most appropriate in meeting an individual child's needs
- working with the school staff on the appropriate strategies and supports needed for individual children

Employee Conduct Branch

The Employee Conduct Branch is responsible for the implementation of policy and the provision of advice on complaint resolution procedures, unsatisfactory performance, serious misconduct (which would include allegations of child abuse), equal opportunity complaints, managing appeals against disciplinary action, criminal records checks and police liaison, as it relates to Victorian Government school and DET employees.

- The branch also manages discipline matters involving members of the teaching service (including Principal Class Officers), Student Support Services and public servants. A key role of the branch is to support Principals or designated officers in their management of processes, and provide advice to them concerning legislative and procedural frameworks.
- The Employee Conduct Branch must be contacted on all issues of alleged serious misconduct including allegations of child abuse and grooming which involve a staff member employed by the Department. This includes teachers and Principals.

Legal Division

The Department's Legal Division provides specific advice to government school Principals in relation to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

Communications Division

The Department's Communications Division manages all Departmental media liaison, and can support Principals of Victorian government schools in responding to media enquiries relating to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

Roles of Other Relevant Authorities:

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

Under the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has a responsibility to provide child protection services for all children and young people under the age of 17 years, or where a protection order is in place, for children under the age of 18.

The main functions of DHHS Child Protection are to:

- receive reports from people who believe that a child is in need of protection or have significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child
- provide consultation and advice to people making reports
- investigate matters where it is believed that a child is at risk of significant harm
- refer children and families to services that assist in providing for the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children.

DHHS Child Protection will also intervene and bring cases before the Children's Court if a child's safety cannot be managed without intervention. DHHS Child Protection has a responsibility to provide adequate supervision, care and protection for children in accordance with orders granted by the Children's Court.

CHILD FIRST

Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST) were introduced to give families an opportunity to obtain family services earlier at their own request or following a referral from others, including school staff.

Child FIRST is staffed by family services practitioners who are experienced in assessing the needs of vulnerable children and their families. Child FIRST teams work closely with community-based DHHS Child Protection workers.

The role of Child FIRST includes:

- providing a point of entry to a local network of family services
- receiving reports about vulnerable children where there are significant concerns about their wellbeing
- undertaking an initial identification and assessment of the risks to the child and the child's needs in consultation with DHHS Child Protection and other services
- identifying appropriate service responses for families.

VICTORIA POLICE

Both DHHS and Victoria Police have statutory responsibilities under the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* in relation to the protection of children. DHHS Child Protection is the lead agency responsible for the care and protection of children, while Victoria Police is responsible for criminal investigations into alleged child abuse.

Members of Victoria Police are protective interveners and mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. The predominant role of police in child abuse incidents is to detect and investigate alleged child physical and sexual abuse and to initiate legal proceedings where appropriate, against the alleged offender/s.

The key responsibilities of Victoria Police in relation to child abuse are to:

- ensure all police members are aware of relevant legislation and their responsibilities
- ensure all police accept and carry out their responsibilities under the Act
- conduct all investigations on the basis that the safety and welfare of the child are paramount
- plan investigations in collaboration with other, relevant agencies
- work with other agencies in accordance with agreed work practices
- provide information to other, relevant agencies
- provide training for staff, and, jointly, with relevant agencies.

Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT) have been established to ensure that appropriately trained and qualified police officers are available to respond to and investigate allegations of child abuse and sexual offences.

Counselling/Support Organisations:

THE CENTRE AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

There are 15 Centres Against Sexual Assault, who work to ensure that women, children and men who are victim/survivors of sexual offending have access to comprehensive and timely support and intervention to address their needs. Phone: 1800 806 292

GATEHOUSE CENTRE, ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Provides support and assistance to children and young people affected by sexual offending or problem sexual behaviours.

CHILDREN'S PROTECTION SOCIETY

Provide advice and support to children and families to help them break out of the cycle of abuse, neglect, poverty and disadvantage through a creative portfolio of programs, resources and services. Phone: (03) 9450 0900

AUSTRALIAN CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION

Provide recognised programs that counsel and support children to recovery, help professionals who work with children to better support at risk children and raise awareness of the causes and consequences of abuse. Phone: 1800 176 453

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited provides legal advice and representation for the Koorie community. Phone: (03) 9322 3555 or country toll free on 1800 015 188

CHILD WISE

Child Wise is Australia's leading international child protection charity committed to the prevention and reduction of sexual abuse and exploitation of children around the world. Phone: (03) 9695 8900

ABORIGINAL FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND LEGAL SERVICES

Provides assistance to victims of family violence and sexual offending and to work with families and communities affected by violence.

HEADSPACE

Headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds, along with assistance in promoting young peoples' wellbeing. This covers four core areas: mental health, physical health, work and study support and alcohol and other drug services. Information and services for young people, their families and friends as well as health professionals can be accessed through this website, headspace centres, online counselling service eheadspace, and postvention suicide support program headspace School Support.

Contact Information

24 HOUR SERVICES

- Victoria Police - 000
- Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection - 131 278
- Department of Education and Training Security Services Unit - (03) 9589 6266

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Security Services Unit - (03) 9589 6266
- Student Incident and Recovery Unit - (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487
- Legal Division - (03) 9637 3146
- Employee Assistance Program - 1300 361 008
- Employee Health - (03) 9637 2395
- Employee Conduct Branch - (03) 9637 2595
- Privacy Unit - (03) 9637 3601
- International Division - (03) 9651 3976
- Communications Division - (03) 9637 2871
- **REGIONAL**
- SOUTH WESTERN VICTORIA
- General inquiries 1300 333 232
- Geelong office (03) 5225 1000

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CHILD PROTECTION

- Regional LGSs Greater Geelong, 1800 075 599

CHILD FIRST

- Greater Geelong 1300 551 948

OTHER SERVICES

- Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) - Emergency Counselling & Support Line - 1800 806 292
- Australian Childhood Foundation - 1800 176 453
- Child Wise - (03) 9695 8900
- Vic Aboriginal Education Association - (03) 9481 0800
- Child Safety Commission - 1300 782 978
- Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner - 1800 880 176
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) - (03) 9287 8800
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) - (03) 9411 9411

SEXUALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR TREATMENT SERVICES PROVIDERS

- Aust Childhood Foundation - (03) 9874 3922

- Children's Protection Society - (03) 9450 0900
 - Berry St - (03) 5822 8100
 - Barwon CASA - (03) 5222 4318
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- [A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST](#)
 - [Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people](#)
 - [Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations - elearning module](#)