

CHILD SAFE POLICY

HARTWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Purpose

Hartwell Primary School's Child Safety Policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe. This document provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to school council members where indicated. The policy will apply to the school environment (see [Definitions](#)). The policy covers both school hours and outside of school hours.

Definitions

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence; or
 - grooming; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school, school council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school;
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other school activities or events).

School staff

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed by the Department of Education and Training;
- directly engaged or employed by a school council; or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider.

Our commitment to child safety

Hartwell Primary School is committed to child safety. We support and respect all children and we are committed to their physical, emotional and environmental safety. Our commitment includes all children's safety, participation and empowerment. 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 according to our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.

Hartwell Primary School is committed to identifying risk of child abuse early and promptly responding to removing and reducing those risks.

Hartwell Primary School has robust recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Hartwell Primary School is obliged, in line with Department of Education policy and Victorian law, to regularly train and update our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks, and procedures for reporting, including:

- following the legal and moral obligations regarding child safety;
- treating seriously and consistently all allegations and safety concerns;
- early identification of risks as well as response to these risks;
- regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

Every person involved at **Hartwell Primary School** has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. **All school staff** are required to act in accordance with their legal obligations, which includes knowledge of:

- Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults);
- Duty of care (applies to all school staff);
- Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses);
- Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school);
- Reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch);
- Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation).

As part of Hartwell Primary School's child safe culture, **school mandatory reporting staff** are required to:

- Complete the Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations online module every year
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with it.

As part of Hartwell Primary School's child safe culture, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school councils and school council members** will:

- Approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes;
- When hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the principal).

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Hartwell Primary School will:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such concerns;
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.

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. **Hartwell Primary School** understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check. All teaching staff are required to hold current VIT registration and to provide evidence of this annually. 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 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.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with DET guidelines.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

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;
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it;
- observation of suspicious behaviour.

Listening to, communicating with and empowering children

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents at **Hartwell Primary School** to read;
- Child Safety information posters will be displayed across the school;
- School newsletters may inform students and the school community about the school's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety.

The school will use its Wellbeing Programs to deliver appropriate education to its students regarding, but not limited to:

- Standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- Healthy and respectful relationships (including the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships program and The Resilience Project).

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last updated on 17/08/2020 and is scheduled for review in 08/2022