

MANAGEMENT

CHILD SAFETY

GENERAL STATEMENT

All children have the right to feel safe and to be safe. All professionals working with children and/or their families share the responsibility of protecting children. The Child Safety Policy underpins the school community's attitude and practices towards child safety, this 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. This policy is written in accordance with the Child Protection Reporting Policy and *Education and Training Reform Act, Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools, Ministerial Order No. 870.*

RATIONALE

Concord School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Concord School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Concord 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. 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 children with a disability.

Every person involved in Concord 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.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions of **Child abuse**

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE AND FAILURE TO PROTECT

All adults, not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. Failure to disclose the information may amount to a criminal offence unless you have a "reasonable excuse" or have an "exemption" from doing so.

Concord school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

PRINCIPLES AND SCHOOL ACTIONS FOR CHILD SAFETY

"In its planning, decision-making and operations Concord 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;
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;

CONCORD SCHOOL POLICY

- 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 issues. Students are explicitly taught this through the Social Competencies program;
- 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; and
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.”

STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- Educating our students on student safety is the core of Concord School Social Competency programs.
- The Concord School Social Competency Scope and Sequence ensures a whole school approach to educating students social skills and personal safety. Each class has a minimum of two timetabled and formalised social skills sessions per week. These sessions include all social skill areas: (Relationships, Feelings, Personal Learning, Self-Perception, Working in Teams, Civics and Citizenship) as well as Personal Safety areas. Additional programs and areas may be taught throughout the year.
- Concord School social competency programs, including the protective behaviours and circle time programs, promote student voice whilst developing students’ social skills; we listen to student views and respect what they have to say.
- The two Social Competency Specialist teachers (Watsonia and Bundoora Campus) explicitly teach Personal Safety and Sexuality to all students each week in small focus groups.
- The two Student Wellbeing Coordinators (Primary and Secondary) provide ongoing support to individual students with wellbeing needs. These one on one sessions provide a safe and supported environment for students to debrief and share their feelings, while also developing their strategies in their area of need.
- The Student Wellbeing coordinators work proactively with small target groups of students focusing on an identified area for development.
- The eSmart Coordinator oversees the school eSmart program delivery across the school through providing training, advice and materials for teaching staff. The eSmart coordinator ensures we are using the most up to date teaching resources that meet the needs of our students. The coordinator also keeps the wider school community informed and educated on cyber safety and how to support our students to be safe whilst online.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the three year policy review cycle and/or in line with DET or DHS directives.

REFERENCES

- Department of Human Services, Child Protection, Children Youth and Families Act (2005)
- School Policy and Advisory Guide
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx>
- Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Documents/protectionofchildren.PDF>
- VRQA Child Safe Resources; A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation
<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/resources.html>
- VRQA The Child Safe Standards
<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/standards.html>