



Montague School
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Child Safe Policy

RATIONALE

In November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce seven child safe standards. These standards apply to all organisations in Victoria involved in child-related work.

In August 2016, Ministerial Order no 870 came in to effect in all Victorian Schools, to create and maintain a child safe organization. The Child Safe Standards aim to promote cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

Montague 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. Montague School has zero tolerance for child abuse and 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 and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of vulnerable children and children with a disability. "

Every person involved in Montague 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.

This policy outlines how we will/have created and will maintain a Child Safe school environment (this includes on school premises, camps, excursions, online and other school events). It addresses each of the seven standards outlined by the Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority as being integral to maintaining a culture of safety for children.

DEFINITION

Child abuse can be defined as an act by parents or caregivers which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time. In Victoria, under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 a child or young person is a person under eighteen years of age. Child abuse can occur in the following ways:

- Physical abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Emotional abuse; or
- Neglect.

AIMS

To ensure that Montague School:

- Fosters an organizational culture in which safety, inclusivity and support for all children underpins all decisions and actions;
- Ensures that maintaining a culture of Child Safety is a cornerstone of the future development of policy and procedure;
- Details the actions it will take to promote child safety;
- Supports, encourages and enables School Council, the Principal, school staff, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters;
- Supports or assists children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse;
- Informs and educates the school community about the Child Safe Standards; and
- Is compliant with Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) policies and procedures, the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and Ministerial Order No. 870.

IMPLEMENTATION

Although this policy is the responsibility of all members of the school community, the Principal has the overall responsibility of implementing this policy, however may choose to delegate certain roles to suitably qualified staff.

All members of the school community will be made clear about their individual roles and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards.

External service providers that engage with the school have their own regulatory body to ensure they meet the Child Safe Standards. However the school will ensure that they have suitable qualifications and meet these standards.

The Child Safe Standards and this policy will be communicated to the school community at least once a year in the following ways:

- **School Council:** brief/review Child Safe Standards once a year and review of the policy as per school schedule
- **Staff:** Briefing at the start of each school year. New staff will have the Child Safe Standards included as part of their induction
- **Parents:** information related to the Child Safe Standards will be included in the newsletter at appropriate and meaningful times throughout the year. All information regarding the Child Safe Standards will be on the school website
- **Students:** Students will be supported in understanding what safety means, how to support each other and how to seek help if needed through explicit teaching.

The school will complete the Memorandum of Understanding for the Child Safe Standards, have this approved by School Council and submit it to the VRQA (Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority)

The school will implement the following strategies, aligned to the seven Child Safety Standards (Ministerial Order No 870) to ensure a culture of safety for its children.

POLICY

Strategies to Embed an Organisational Culture of Child Safety, including Thorough Effective Leadership Arrangements

Montague School will:

- Have goals and related strategies in its School Strategic Plan & Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) related to Student Engagement and Student Wellbeing;
- Ensure there is provision in the school budgets to fund child safety and student welfare priorities;
- Assign the role of Student Wellbeing to a Leading Teacher, working in a team across the school to discuss and review wellbeing practices, including child safety, in regular meetings;
- Ensure that the ICT teacher maintains e-Smart accreditation by continuing to implement and refine online safety initiatives throughout the school'
- Have regular student wellbeing meetings with DET SSSO Staff (Psychologist, Allied Health Staff and appropriate staff members) to discuss student wellbeing, safety and educational needs;
- Support all students' (and their family's) safety and wellbeing through the PSD (Program for Students with a Disability);
- Assign teaching and Education Support staff to yard duty to adequately monitor the welfare and safety of identified students;
- Assign dates in the school calendar to allow for professional development related to child safety and staff training (e.g. Mandatory Reporting Training, DET modules, DHHS updates etc.);
- As part of the induction and mentoring of new staff share and discuss this policy;
- Maintain detailed records of student safety and wellbeing issues. Highly confidential issues will be kept securely;
- Review child safety practices each year, utilizing the DET's Risk Management Template (Appendix 2);
- Review child safety as part of the annual report as per DET guidelines; and
- Ensure policies (Child safe, Code of Conduct, Student Engagement and Inclusion, Duty of care and school values statements) are known to staff and community – handbooks, website, newsletter updates.

A Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety at Montague School

Montague 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.

Montague School has zero tolerance for child abuse. Montague 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 and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of vulnerable children and children with a disability.

Every person involved in Montague 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.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Montague 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 behavior towards children;
- 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 to with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
- 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;
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Montague School will ensure the following policies (all of which support the maintenance of a Child Safe Environment) are implemented, regularly reviewed and available on the school's website:

- **Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy:** outlines proactive and reactive responses the school takes with regard to student engagement, wellbeing and inclusion
- **Bullying and Prevention Policy:** outlines the proactive and reactive measures the school implements when incidences of bullying occur
- **Mandatory Reporting Policy (DET):** outlines the process and requirement of reporting incidences of child abuse
- **Duty of Care Policy:** outlines the procedures in place for ensuring that all people working within the school have had the required checks to ensure their suitability to work with or in the vicinity of children
- **First Aid Policy:** outlines how the school manages incidences of physical harm and communicates these to parents/ carers.

Roles & Responsibilities

School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

The Business Manager is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 3 years.

- The Business Manager is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach the Business Manager if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Business Manager is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Montague School's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training occurs annually or more often as required.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children. An annual discussion on the individual and collective responsibilities for child safe standards is facilitated with staff to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the school, including by being referred to the Child Safety Policy (this document), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website. They will also be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported by school staff to the Principal or Assistant Principal and will be managed in accordance with Montague School's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures [Mandatory reporting](#) where required.

As part of Montague 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:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings. These discussions will include the school's current child safety standards, and child abuse risks in the school environment.
- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the [Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint](#). This PowerPoint includes details on the individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse."
- 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

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

A Code of Conduct that Establishes Clear Expectations for Appropriate Behaviour with Children

Montague School will:

- Adopt the Code of Conduct (Appendix 1) which establishes clear expectations for appropriate behavior with children, clearly outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviours;
- Use the Statement of Values (Appendix 3) as a way of outlining clear expectations behavior with regard to their interactions with each other from the Principal, Teachers, Parents and Students; and
- Circulate this Statement of Values to the school community annually, through the newsletter and is available on the school's website.

Screening, Supervision, Training & Other Human Resources Practices that Reduce the Risk of Child Abuse by New and Existing Personnel

Montague School will:

- Follow Merit and Equity-based recruiting processes outlined by DET whilst adhering to the Child Safe Standards;
- Include the 'Child Safe Environments' clause (as provided in the Recruitment Online School's Guide) in all position descriptions for job vacancies;
- During the application process, the panel will assess the applicant's:
 - Motivation to work with children
 - Relevant and verifiable child-related work experience;
 - Understanding of professional boundaries; and
 - Communication and interpersonal skills
- Before a letter of offer is provided, the chair of the selection panel (or a delegate) will check the following:
 - Two forms of identification e.g. driver's licence, passport etc.;
 - Academic transcripts/qualifications;
 - Work history and previous employment details are accurate; and
 - Gaps in the applicant's employment history and are there valid reasons for this e.g. travel, study, family leave
- Check that the applicant has any relevant experience working with children outside employment. E.g. Volunteering, tutoring or coaching;
- Ensure all teachers have a current VIT (Victorian Institute of Teaching) registration card. Through the VIT process teachers will undertake a police check (timing deemed by VIT);
- That referees (preferably the most current employer / manager) can verify:
 - There is not a personal relationship between the applicant's supervisor or manager that may affect the objectivity of the reference;
 - They have directly supervised the applicant working with children and/or deem them suitable to do so;
 - They see them as being suitable to the applied for role;
 - Has the referee any concerns with the applicant working with children;
 - Did the referee have any concerns about the applicant adhering to Child Safe Standards;
 - Have the referees observed the applicant managing the behavior of a child and what did they notice; and
 - That any written referee statements are authentic.

- Ensure volunteers provide a copy of their Working with Children Check (WWCC) and are signed in at the office and read/sign the Code of Conduct on first visit;
- Sight WWCC of contractors and other visitors who enter the school and ensure they are signed in at the office and read and sign the Code of Conduct;
- Ensure all new staff are aware of child safe standards and their obligations for mandatory reporting as part of the induction and mentoring process; and
- Ensure time is allocated for staff to update their Mandatory Reporting eLearning Training modules each year (DET requirement). Provisions will be made in the school calendar of any other professional development sessions we need to undertake related to child safety.

Processes for Responding to and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Montague School will:

- Comply with the DET's Mandatory Reporting Policy outlining all DET employee's response to suspected child abuse;
- Ensure all staff are aware of the PROTECT website and are trained annually in this area using resources provided by DET:
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx>;
- In any cases where a staff member is considering making a report due to reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, ensure they consult the Step by Step Guide to Making a Report to Child Protection or Child FIRST (Appendix 4) and inform the Principal:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/schcritical.aspx>
- Follow the '**Four Critical Actions for Schools**': Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse:
- In accordance with the DET's Mandatory Reporting Policy, ensure that:
 - All members of the Teaching Service who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection;
 - All other school staff who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection or therapeutic treatment or have significant concerns, are encouraged to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police or Child First;
 - All adults are required to report to police if they know or reasonably believe that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. It will be a criminal offence to fail to comply with this obligation; and
 - Staff are to keep their own notes of interactions/reports to DHHS or Child First and provide copies and discuss with the Principal so files are updated. The Protect proforma is available from Leading teacher and copy in Child Safe procedure handbook.

Strategies to Identify and Reduce or Remove the Risk of Abuse

Montague School will:

- Monitor unwell students and student absences on an ongoing basis. Specific incidences, trends and children of concern are discussed and followed up as required;
- Refer to the Child Safe Risk Assessment template (Appendix 2);
- Ask for parent permission before using photographs or video of students for public forums, eg. Newspapers, online, newsletters and adhere to any requests not to publish documents;
- Keep photos and videos of students on a secure network;

- Provide adequate yard duty staff – teacher / ES staff to cover all recess and lunch breaks and from 8:45-9:00am and from 2:45-3:00pm daily;
- Complete risk assessments for any excursions considering the Child Safe Standards when doing so;
- Consider Child Safe practices and potential issues in our risk registers for Camps and Excursions;
- Risks are reviewed after any incidences and adjustments made;
- Ensure provisions are made for staff training and professional development around child safety; and
- Ensure our school grounds are safe for children and that children are encouraged to display safe and sensible behaviours – as taught explicitly within the SWPBS framework.

Listening to, communicating with and empowering children

Montague School has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students can access information on how to report abuse at [insert place, e.g. school reception, and/or link].

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

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 Montague School to read at the office.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- School newsletters will 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 health and wellbeing programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

Montague School currently runs Respectful Relationships and has provided classes on Sexual Health and Development.

Communications

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are available on the school website
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion

Strategies to Promote the Participation and Empowerment of Children

Montague School will:

- The school will continue to implement practices that develop trusting relationships and value students' participation in decision-making;
- SWPBS is embedded at Montague – focusing on consistency in approach and explicit teaching of positive and appropriate behavior for all students, ensuring language and appropriate visuals are used for greater understanding by all students throughout the school;
- Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships is part of the curriculum mapped for all students, through both Health and Physical Education and Personal and Social Capabilities;
- The e-Smart cyber safety program provides a framework to support students to be cyber safe and to develop strategies to remain within a respectful and caring online community;
- Sexuality Education forms part of the planned curriculum across the school, including public/private, body awareness, personal hygiene and emotions/feelings;
- All education Programs are planned in teams across the school, with continual staff PD, discussion and reviews held;
- Information sessions held for families – raising awareness on issues – eg. Cyber safety, SWPBS etc.;
- Welfare and allied health teams support students and families to access services as necessary to engage and access the curriculum eg. Specialized equipment needed; and
- The Montague School Child Safe procedure document outlines the procedures to be followed by staff, to ensure our students are safe within our environment. The SWPBS handbook outlines positive behavior strategies used throughout the whole school to develop a positive school climate. It teaches students to manage their own behavior in a respectful and positive way.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- VRQA
<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards/html>
- DET Protect:
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx>

REVIEW CYCLE

This Code of Conduct or Policy was endorse/approved by the Montague School Council in August 2019 for review if legislative or other changes require in the interim or no later than November 2020.