

PROTECT

School Council Training

The Child Safe Standards



In this presentation

- This training presentation explains the Child Safe Standards, our school's obligations to manage the risk of child abuse, and child abuse risks in the school environment
- These slides also explain the role and responsibilities of the principal and school council in implementing the Child Safe Standards
- Further information on managing the risk of child abuse, child abuse risks in the school environment, and the school's current child safety standards is available in our school's child safety material:
 - Child Safety Policy
 - Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including mandatory reporting) Policy and Procedures
 - Child Safety Risk Register



Child Safe Standards - Context

- 2013: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations (Betrayal of Trust)
- 2017: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- Upcoming child safety changes include:
 - [Inclusion of school counsellors as mandatory reporters](#)
 - [Child Information Sharing Scheme](#)
 - [Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme](#)



What are the Child Safe Standards?

There are seven Child Safe Standards, plus a Principle of Inclusion.

- **Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an **organisational culture of child safety**
- **Standard 2:** A **child safety policy** or statement of commitment to child safety
- **Standard 3:** A **child safety code of conduct**
- **Standard 4:** Screening, supervision, training and other **human resources practices** that reduce the risk of child abuse
- **Standard 5:** Procedures for **responding to and reporting suspected child abuse**
- **Standard 6:** Strategies to identify and **reduce or remove risks** of child abuse
- **Standard 7:** Strategies to promote **child participation and empowerment**

All Victorian schools are required to comply with the Child Safe Standards.

Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools outlines how the Standards apply in schools.



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The **school governing authority** has responsibility for a number of requirements under Ministerial Order 870.

‘School governing authority’ means:

- The governing body for a school (which includes the **school council**); and/or
- The principal; and/or
- The proprietor of a school (e.g. DET Secretary).

School councils must comply with the Ministerial Order to the extent of the powers, functions and duties given to them by legislation. School councils may delegate many of these powers to the principal.



Principle of Inclusion

The Child Safe Standards require that provisions are made for children most vulnerable to child abuse.

The principle of inclusion requires schools to take account of the diversity of **all** children, but also specifically:

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** children  
- Children from **culturally and linguistically diverse** backgrounds
- Children with **disabilities**
- **Vulnerable** children

Schools must make reasonable efforts to accommodate the needs of these children in the development of all child safety strategies, policies and processes.



Principle of Inclusion

Role of the principal

- Ensure that the school takes account of and makes reasonable efforts to accommodate the diversity of all children in implementing the Child Safe Standards
- Ensure that the Child Safety Policy refers to the diversity of all children

Role of the school council

- No specific role for school council



Standard 1 – Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

Examples of strategies:

- Staff and school council training and professional learning (e.g. this presentation, mandatory reporting online module, trauma-informed practice PDs)
- Communication to parents and the community to raise awareness (e.g. newsletters, class discussion, or year level assembly)
- Health and wellbeing education programs (e.g. respectful relationships, sexuality education)
- Environmental factors (e.g. posters, school website)

Evidence of strategies might include:

- The school's strategies are mentioned in the **child safety policy** or other documentation
- Child safety is a regular agenda item at staff/school council meetings
- Staff have been allocated specific child safety-related roles and responsibilities
- An action plan to address any identified gaps or areas for improvement



Standard 1 – Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

Role of the principal

- Approve strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety (see previous slide for ideas)
- Ensure that the strategies are implemented
- Ensure that the school's strategies are included in its Child Safety Policy

Role of the school council

- Where relevant to the school council, implement the strategies and inform the school community of them



Standard 2 – A Child Safety Policy or statement of commitment to child safety

A Child Safety Policy is a document that outlines the organisation's approach to creating child safe environments.

- A template Child Safety Policy can be found on the School Policy Templates Portal [\[insert link\]](#).
- Further guidance on developing a Child Safety Policy can be found on the Department's [PROTECT](#) website.
- The Child Safety Policy must be publicly available (see slides 27 and 29 for more information)



Standard 2 – A Child Safety Policy or statement of commitment to child safety

Role of the principal

- Approve the Child Safety Policy
- Ensure that the Child Safety Policy is made publicly available

Role of the school council

- No specific role for school council



Standard 3 – A child safety Code of Conduct

An [example Code of Conduct](#) is available on PROTECT.

The Code of Conduct should:

- have the objective of promoting child safety in the school environment,
- set clear and specific standards of behaviour for staff with children.
- apply to all school staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work
- be publicly available (see slides 27 and 29 for more information).



Standard 3 – A child safety Code of Conduct

Role of the principal

- Approve a Code of Conduct that meets the requirements of MO 870
- Ensure that the Code of Conduct is made publicly available

Role of the school council

- Approve the Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council members and employees (unless delegated to the principal)



Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse

School recruitment and ongoing supervision of staff (including employees, volunteers and contractors) should ensure a child safe environment.

The school must **follow the [Recruitment in Schools Guide](#)**.

- Non-recruitment practices should include:
 - Working with Children Checks (as required by law or school policy)
 - Staff and volunteer induction
 - Staff performance review and management.

The Child Safety Policy should refer to the school's recruitment, supervision and management practices in place to protect children.



Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse

Role of the principal

- Ensure that the school follows the [Recruitment in Schools Guide](#) to ensure the school's hiring practices are child safe
- Ensure that the school follows their Volunteers Policy
- Ensure that the Child Safety Policy (or another document) refers to the school's recruitment, supervision and management practices in place to protect children.

Role of the school council

- For school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the principal), including:
 - Jobs involving child-connected work have a statement setting out the job's requirements and duties regarding child safety
 - Inform applicants for jobs involving child-connected work about the school's child safety practices (including the Code of Conduct)
 - Complete suitability checks for the preferred candidate
 - Ensure that appropriate supervision and support arrangements are in place



Case Study – Failure

Royal Commission Case Study No. 9

A Special School wished to employ a bus driver to take students with disabilities to and from school each day while unsupervised.

In recruiting the driver, the school principal:

- Did not write a shortlist of applicants
- Interviewed the applicants alone
- Did not contact referees by telephone
- Did not consult the chairperson of the board of management before hiring an applicant.

These actions were against school policies for recruitment.

No police clearance check was undertaken before the driver was hired. The bus driver was not supervised while driving the bus.

What did the school and principal do wrong?



Case Study - What Happened?

- The bus driver that the Special School hired had been previously convicted of:
 - Abduction of a child by force or fraud
 - Carnal knowledge or attempted carnal knowledge (on two different occasions)
 - Various larceny and minor dishonesty offences
- After five years working at the school, the driver was convicted of five sexual offences in relation to three students at the school and was sentenced to 10 years and 6 months imprisonment.



Standard 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

- The school must have clear procedures for responding to allegations of suspected child abuse (see the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) for guidance)
- The procedures should be publicly available, and accessible to children (see slides 27 and 29 for more information)
- A [template](#) can be found on the School Policy Templates Portal. This should be contextualised to the specific environment of your school and include roles and responsibilities



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:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

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.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE

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

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

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- Employee Conduct Branch

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

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.

VICTORIA POLICE

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

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

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or chairperson.

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your 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/carer (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 parent/carer 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)
- **how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your 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 your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

AREA

North Division **1300 664 977**
 South Division **1300 655 795**
 East Division **1300 360 391**
 West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
 West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**.

CHILD FIRST

<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>

ORANGE DOOR

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE
1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT
1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE

Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
 Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
 Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
 Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT

The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <http://www.lookout.org.au>.

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.



Standard 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Role of the principal

- Approve Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) policy and procedures
- Ensure that the procedures are made publicly available and accessible

Role of the school council

- No specific role for school council



Reporting obligations

- The Child Safe Standards **do not** replace other legal obligations to report child abuse, such as mandatory reporting or the failure to disclose offence
- Rather, the law and department policies require **everyone** to raise child safety concerns and report abuse to relevant authorities
- The Child Safe Standards create a school environment of responsibility and a culture of reporting
- For more information on reporting, see:
 - [Staff obligations to protect children](#)
 - The [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)



Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Schools must:
 - Develop, implement, record, and monitor risk management strategies (e.g. by using the **Child Safety Risk Assessment Register** [\[insert link\]](#)) that:
 - Identify the risks of child abuse in the school environment and specify the actions the school will take to reduce or remove risks
 - Are **contextualised to the school**
 - Provide **annual guidance and training** to school council and school staff on roles and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, child abuse risks identified in your school and the school's current child safety

Evidence might include:

- A regularly monitored risk register
- Evidence that school council has been given appropriate guidance and training annually by using **this presentation**
- Evidence that school staff are given annual child safety guidance and training, e.g.:
 - [Protecting children: Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations e-learning module](#)
 - Staff watch the Commission for Children and Young People's video on [Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#)
 - Staff review of [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) [\[accessible\]](#)
 - Other appropriate annual child safety guidance and training



Contact the DET risk team for help!
risk.in.education@edumail.vic.gov.au

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

PROTECT

Protecting children & young people
from abuse is our responsibility

Role of the principal

- Approve the Child Safety Risk Assessment Register (or another document that records risk management strategies)
- Ensure that the effectiveness of the risk management strategies is monitored (e.g. by reviewing the Risk Assessment Register)
- Ensure that appropriate guidance and training about child safety is provided to school staff at least annually

Role of the school council

- Undertake appropriate guidance and training about child safety at least annually (such as reviewing this PowerPoint)



Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Examples of risks (taken from the template on [PROTECT](#))

Risk description
The school does not report child safety concerns
A child safety incident in an online environment
A child safety incident when a child is unsupervised including during recreational or other activities
A staff member commits child abuse



Consider risks that are specific to your school and ways you can reduce or remove those risks (e.g. risks arising from sound insulated music rooms, a wide age range of students in the same playground, student access to staff mobile phone numbers, or a classroom with restricted lines of sight)



Case Study – Failure

Royal Commission Case Study No. 12

- A school had limited or no staff training on identifying child abuse
- The school had no child protection policy until 2004, and the policy that was introduced in 2004 failed to provide sufficient information about how child abuse occurs, and had no reference to grooming
- Staff and parents were not aware of any policies or procedures on reporting child abuse or inappropriate behaviours, and were concerned that they might be ostracised for reporting

What did the school do wrong?



Case Study – What Happened?

- Over six years, eight complaints were made about a teacher's inappropriate conduct by other teachers and a parent
- The headmaster gave a number of warnings to the teacher but nothing else was done and no reports were made to any authorities
- In 2009, nine years after the first complaint was made, a child disclosed that they had been sexually abused by the teacher
- The teacher was charged with 17 offences against 5 different students at the school



Standard 7: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

The school must:

- develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:
 - Standards of behaviour for students
 - Healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
 - Resilience; and
 - Child abuse awareness and prevention.
- promote the Standards in ways that are **accessible, easy to understand and child-friendly**, e.g.:
 - Displaying [PROTECT posters](#) at school
 - Making all Child Safe Standards documents publicly available (e.g. on the school's website)
 - Providing students with child safety materials designed for them (e.g. worksheets, posters, songs), or made by them (e.g. students making and displaying their own child safety posters)
 - Discussing child safety in class.

Evidence might include:

- Lesson plans
- All Child Safe Standards documents are publicly available
- Child-friendly posters
- Child safety worksheets, songs, or poems taught in class
- Information and articles in school newsletters or electronic bulletins



See [A Guide to Support Victorian Schools to meet Child Safe Standard 7](#)

Standard 7: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

Role of the principal

- Approve strategies to deliver appropriate education about:
 - Standards of behavior for students attending the school
 - Healthy and respectful relationships
 - Resilience; and
 - Child abuse awareness and education
- Ensure that the school promotes the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly to children

Role of the school council

- No specific role for school council



Informing the school community

MO 870 requires the **school community to be informed** about:

- strategies to embed a culture of child safety with allocated roles and responsibilities
- the Child Safety Policy, the Code of Conduct, and Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) policy and procedures (these must all be made publicly available).

Practical tips:

- Upload policies and procedures to school website
- Website and school signage/[posters regarding the Child Safe Standards](#)
- Newsletters, school or year level assembly, parent information sessions
- Promote Child Safe Standards in ways that are accessible and user-friendly to children, e.g. child safety games, songs, poems, discussion in class or at year level assembly, [child-friendly PROTECT posters](#)

School community includes:

- students
- school council
- all school staff
- contractors
- families
- volunteers
- visitors to the school



Possible Consequences of Non-Compliance

- Greater risk of child abuse
- Unsafe school culture
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority action
- Commission for Children and Young People investigations
- Breach of duty of care/organisational duty of care
- Failure to report/failure to protect offences.

We all want to keep our kids safe!



Questions?

Government Schools can find guidance on complying with the Child Safe Standards on the Department's website:

[School Policy Templates Portal](#)

[PROTECT School Guidance](#)

Or email: child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au

