



www.orchgveps.vic.edu.au
orchard.grove.ps@education.vic.gov.au
phone 03 9894 3400
101 Orchard Grove, Blackburn South 3130

DUTY OF CARE POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain to our school community the non-delegable duty of care obligations that all staff at Orchard Grove Primary School owe to our students and members of the school community who visit and use the school premises.

POLICY

“Duty of care” is a legal obligation that requires schools to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include personal injury (physical or psychological) or damage to property. The reasonable steps that our school may decide to take in response to a potential risk or hazard will depend on the circumstances of the risk.

Our school has developed policies and procedures to manage common risks in the school environment, including:

- Yard duty and Supervision
- Bullying Prevention
- Camps and Excursions
- First Aid
- Child Safe Standards
- Grounds maintenance
- Student Private Property
- Emergency Management
- Volunteers
- Visitors
- Working with Children and Suitability Checks
- Mandatory Reporting
- Occupational Health and Safety

Our school acknowledges we are required to take reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse of a child by an individual associated with the organisation while the child is under the care, supervision or authority of the organisation.

Staff at our school understand that school activities involve different levels of risk and that particular care may need to be taken to support younger students or students with additional needs. Our school also understands that it is responsible for ensuring that the school premises are kept in good repair and will take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of members of our community suffering injury or damage because of the state of the premises.

School staff, parents, carers and students are encouraged to speak to the principal to raise any concerns about risks or hazards at our school, or our duty of care obligations.

GUIDELINES

Although the general duty is to take reasonable steps to protect students from reasonably foreseeable risks of injury, specific (but not exhaustive) requirements of the duty involve providing adequate supervision in the school or on school activities as well as providing safe and suitable buildings, grounds and equipment.

Apart from mandatory reporting requirements, a teacher has a concurrent duty of care to protect a student from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. A breach of this duty of care will be established if a teacher or Principal fail to take immediate and positive steps after having acquired actual knowledge or formed a belief that there is a risk that a child is being abused or neglected, including sexual abuse.

The teacher's duty of care is greater than that of the ordinary citizen in that a teacher is obliged to protect a student from reasonably foreseeable harm or to assist an injured student, while the ordinary citizen does not have a legal obligation to respond.

Teachers should be fully aware of the following common examples of risks to duty of care. These may result in a teacher failing to meet their legal duty of care responsibilities to their students:

- arriving late to class or leaving a class early
- arriving late to scheduled timetabled yard duty responsibilities
- failing to act appropriately to protect a student who claims to be bullied
- believing that a child is being abused but failing to report the matter appropriately
- being late to supervise the line up of students after the bell has sounded
- leaving students unattended in the classroom
- failing to instruct a student who is not wearing a hat to play in the shade
- ignoring dangerous play
- leaving the school during time release without approval
- inadequate supervision on a school excursion

Staff members are also cautioned against giving advice on matters that they are not professionally competent to give (negligent advice). Advice is to be limited to areas within a teacher's own professional competence and given in situations arising from a role (such as student welfare coordinator, teacher or level coordinator) specified for them by the principal.

Teachers must ensure that the advice they give is correct and, where appropriate, in line with the most recent available statements from institutions or employers. Teachers should not give advice in areas outside those related to their role where they may lack expertise.

Risks to Students Outside the School Environment

It is important that the school takes **reasonable steps** to protect students from risks.

Risks outside the school environment may sometimes call for immediate and positive steps by a school depending on the age of students, urgency and threat of injury. Consider for example, if a live power line came down outside the school, no emergency workers had arrived, and primary children were about to be dismissed to walk home. No school would allow the children to walk out to that danger unsupervised. There may be a number of other situations where the school will be under a duty to take reasonable steps.

While students are moving around the buildings and working independently in break out spaces and designated study areas they must be under adult supervision at all times.

Staff are responsible for their students at all times.

External Providers

Staff at our school acknowledge that, as our duty of care is non-delegable, we are also required to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm when external providers have been engaged to plan for or conduct an activity involving our students. Our *Visitors Policy* and *Camps and Excursions Policy* include information on the safety and care of our students when engaged with external providers.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways :

- Provided to staff at induction and included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff meetings/briefings as required
- Made available publicly on our school website
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

Duty of Care Procedures documented below for all staff contains further details and **applies to all staff**.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Department policies and guidelines:
DET Policy and Advisory Library:

- the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Duty of Care](#)
- the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Structured Workplace Learning](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this Duty of Care Policy:

- Yard Duty and Supervision
- Bullying Prevention

- Camps and Excursions
- First Aid
- Child Safety
- Emergency Management
- Volunteers
- Visitors

Review Cycle And Evaluation

Ratified August 2024

Schedule for review in 2027