



## **Guthridge Primary School's COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS**

Guthridge Primary School is committed to creating a school community where all staff and students are equally respected and valued, and enjoy equity of both opportunity and outcomes.

Our school is committed to child safety and gender equality. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.

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.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

All adults and children are responsible for promoting gender equality and modelling respectful relationships.

All staff, students and visitors to this school will be held accountable if they use language and/or demonstrate behaviour which compromises the safety or wellbeing of others, including

- Perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes or unequal power relations between men and women; or
- Being disrespectful, or condoning violence, against women and children.

**By signing in to our school as a visitor, you acknowledge our commitment to Child Safe & Respectful Relationships Education and agree to being responsible for practising respectful behaviours towards all members of the Guthridge Primary School community.**



# GUTHRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## CHILD SAFETY POLICY



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Guthridge Primary School 51 44 3633.

## Purpose

The Guthridge Primary School Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

## Scope

This policy:

- Applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- Applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers.
- Should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies below:
  - [Bullying Prevention Policy](#)
  - [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#)
  - [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
  - [Complaints Policy](#)
  - [Digital Learning Policy](#)
  - [Inclusion and Diversity Policy](#)
  - [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
  - [Visitors Policy](#)
  - [Volunteers Policy](#)

## Definitions

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- **Child** - Child means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.
- **child safety** - Child safety includes 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 suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.
- **child abuse** includes:
  - a) any act committed against a child involving:
    - a sexual offence
    - grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958

- b) the infliction, on a child, of:
  - physical violence
  - serious emotional or psychological harm
- c) the serious neglect of a child.
- **child-connected work** -
  - a) work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present
  - b) for the purposes of a school boarding premises, work authorised by the provider of school boarding premises in a school boarding premises environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Note: Working with Children clearance is required by law only for people who engage in child-related work.
- **child-related work** - The Worker Screening Act 2020 defines 'child-related work' as work which usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child, irrespective of whether that contact is supervised or not, and in any of the child-related occupational fields listed in the Act. The definition of direct contact includes oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact. 'Child-related work' may be either paid or unpaid (voluntary).
- **school environment** – School environment means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:
  - a) A campus of the school
  - b) Online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services)
  - c) Other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
    1. camps
    2. approved homestay accommodation;
    3. delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or (iv) sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.
- **school staff** - a) in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is: employed under Part 2.4 of the ETR Act in the Government teaching service employed under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act  
a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work school governing authority
- **Student** means a person who is enrolled at or attends the school or a student at the school boarding premises.
- **Volunteer** means a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school or school boarding premises in the school environment or school boarding premises environment.

## Statement of commitment to child safety

Guthridge Primary School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## Roles and responsibilities

### School leadership team

Our Principal, Assistant Principal, Child Safety Champion, and Wellbeing Team are responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and Assistant Principal will:

- Ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- Model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- Enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- Reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- Promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings, team meetings and school council meetings
- Facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- Create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

### School staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- Participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures - [Child Safe Standards Staff Training slide presentation](#)
- Act in accordance with our [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#), including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- Ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- Implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

## School council

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

- Champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- Undertake annual training on child safety - [Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation](#)
- Approve updates to, and act in accordance with the [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- When hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy.

## Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Guthridge Primary School has nominated a Child Safety Champion to support the Principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the Child Safety Champion are outlined at [Guthridge PS Child Safety Champion Role Description](#).

Our Principal, leadership and wellbeing teams are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Anyone in our school community should approach the Child Safety Champion if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in 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 Child Safety Risk Register.

Our Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Leaders have input into school strategies.

Our Leadership Team monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

## Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

## Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities, and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## Establishing a culturally safe environment

At Guthridge Primary School, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

Our [Aboriginal Learning Wellbeing and Safety plan](#) outlines the measures and strategies we have in place to promote and maintain an inclusive and culturally safe school for Aboriginal children.

## Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Guthridge Primary School, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through our school values, our school expectations, implementing our whole school approaches to School Wide Positive Behaviours and Respectful Relationships, and our student Code of Conduct.

We inform students of their rights through our whole school approach to the teaching of social emotional learning which incorporates the Department's Positive Behaviours for Learning, Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationships and Catching On Early programs and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe, and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also report concerns directly to the school.

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

## Family engagement

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Guthridge Primary School we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- Seeking input through school council, subcommittees of school council, student, staff, and parent communication methods
- Ensuring that all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on our [school website](#) and by request from the Office

- Informing families and the school community through the school newsletter about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety
- Displaying PROTECT Child Safety posters and child-speak folders in all classrooms, and across the school.

## Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Children and young people with disabilities
- Children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- International students
- Children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement, and Inclusion and Diversity Policies provide more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

## Suitable staff and volunteers

At Guthridge Primary School, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

### Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education and Training's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)
- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management.](#)

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- Sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- Collect and record:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - the person's history of working with children
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

### Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- The Child Safety Policy (this document)
- The Child Safety Code of Conduct

- The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and
- Child safety and wellbeing induction training - [Child Safe Standards Staff Training slide presentation](#)

### Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work through DET Performance and Development processes.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

### Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our [Volunteers Policy](#), which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

## Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- Our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- Completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- Recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- Responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- How to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- Information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- How to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

Under the Child Safe Standards, all volunteers working at our school or a school activity where children are likely to be present are made aware of the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct. Volunteers are also made aware of the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

### School council training and education

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually - [Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation](#)



Training includes guidance on:

- Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- Child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Guthridge Primary School's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

## Complaints and reporting processes

Guthridge Primary School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's [Complaint Policy](#).

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees) must follow our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#). Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) and [Bullying Prevention Policy](#) cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

## Communications

Guthridge Primary School is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are [available on our website](#) including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- Displaying PROTECT posters and Child Speak folders around the school
- Updates in our school newsletter
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

## Privacy and information sharing

Guthridge Primary School collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

## Records management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

## Review of child safety practices

At Guthridge Primary School, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- Review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- Analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- Act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

## Related policies and procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- [Bullying Prevention Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning Policy](#)
- [Inclusion and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Visitors Policy](#)
- [Volunteers Policy](#)

### Related Department of Education and Training policies

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

### Other related documents

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

## Policy status and review

Guthridge Primary School Leadership Team is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school council as representative of the Guthridge Primary School community.

### Approval

<b>Review date</b>	Sept 2022
<b>Consultation</b>	The review includes input from the school council as representative of the Guthridge Primary School community.
<b>Approved by</b>	School Council and Emily Streitberg - Principal
<b>Approved on</b>	17/10/2022
<b>Next review date</b>	Prior to October 2024



# GUTHRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Guthridge Primary School 51 44 3633.

## Purpose

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of adults with children and young people in our school.

All Guthridge Primary School, staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, school council members and any other adult involved in child-connected work must follow the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct applies to all physical and online environments used by students. It also applies during or outside of school hours and in other locations provided by the school for student use (for example, a school camp).

## Acceptable behaviours

As Guthridge Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors, and members of our school community involved in child-connected work, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding our Guthridge Primary School commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to our Child Safety Policy
- treating students and families in our school community with respect in our school environment and outside our school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they disclose that they or another child or student has been abused or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) students
- ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student – one-to-one interactions between an adult and a student are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the principal or a member of the leadership or wellbeing team, or the Child Safety Champion.
- understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) in line with our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#) and procedures and the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#)
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

## Unacceptable behaviours

As Guthridge Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors and members of our school community involved in child-connected work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm

- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to ‘grooming’ behaviour (for example, by offering gifts)
- display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context
- ignore an adult’s overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student
- discuss intimate topics or use sexualised language, except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance
- treat a child or student unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child or student in a school environment except in accordance with the [Photographing, Filming and Recording Students policy](#) or where required for duty of care purposes
- consume alcohol against school policy or take illicit drugs in the school environment or at school events where students are present
- have contact with any student outside of school hours except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance and parental permission has been sought.

## Breaches to the Child Safety Code of Conduct

All Guthridge Primary School, staff, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work who breach this Child Safety Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with their employment agreement or relevant industrial instrument, professional code or terms of engagement.

In instances where a reportable allegation has been made, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Department of Education and Training Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy and may be subject to referral to Victoria Police.

All breaches and suspected breaches of the Guthridge Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct must be reported to the principal or Child Safety Champion.

If the breach or suspected breach relates to the principal, contact the Department South East Victorian Regional Office

Phone: 1300 338 738

Email: [sevr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:sevr@education.vic.gov.au)

## Approval and review

<b>Review date</b>	<b>October 2022</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	The review includes input from the school council as representative of the Guthridge Primary School community.
<b>Endorsed and Approved by</b>	School Council and Emily Streitberg – Principal on 17/10/2022
<b>Next review date</b>	Prior to October 2024



# CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Guthridge Primary School on 51 44 3633.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures our school has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse and to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand and follow the various legal obligations that apply to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school (physical and online).

## DEFINITIONS

### Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- physical violence inflicted on a child
- sexual offences committed against a child
- grooming of a child by an adult
- family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include student to student incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

### Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating (including electronic communications) and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

### School staff member

For the purpose of this policy a school staff member includes a contractor engaged by the school or school council to perform child-related work.

## POLICY

Guthridge Primary School understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse. We have a range of policies and measures in place to prevent child abuse from occurring at our school or during school activities.

### Information for students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at Guthridge Primary School they should start with their classroom teacher, student wellbeing staff, or any teacher they feel comfortable talking to.
- Children can refer to PROTECT Child Safety posters, and Child Speak folders displayed around the school and in all classrooms.

### Identifying child abuse

To ensure we can respond in the best interests of students and children when complaints or concerns relating to child abuse are raised, all staff and relevant volunteers must:

- understand how to identify signs of child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators - for detailed information on identifying child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators refer to [Identify child abuse](#).
- understand their various legal obligations in relation to reporting child abuse to relevant authorities - for detailed information on the various legal obligations refer to Appendix A
- follow the below procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure our school acts in the best interests of students and children and complies with both our legal and Department policy obligations.

At Guthridge Primary School we recognise the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering and responding to child safety incidents or concerns.

### Procedures for responding to an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse

In responding to a child safety incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, Guthridge Primary School will follow:

- the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) for complaints and concerns relating to all forms of child abuse
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending
- our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful student behaviours.

#### School staff and volunteer responsibilities

##### 1. Immediate action

If a school staff member or volunteer witnesses an incident of child abuse, or reasonably believes, suspects or receives a disclosure or allegation that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid (appropriate to their level of training) and call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Notify the Principal or a member of the Leadership or Wellbeing Team, or the Child Safety Champion as soon as possible, who will ensure our school follows the steps in these procedures.

NOTE for staff and volunteers:

- if you are uncertain if an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion gives rise to a concern about child abuse you must always err on the side of caution and report the concern to the Principal or a member of the Leadership or Wellbeing Team, or the Child Safety Champion.
- If the concerns relates to the conduct of staff members referred to above, notify either the principal or the regional office where the person nominated above is the principal, who must then take on responsibility for ensuring our school follows these procedures:

Department South East Victorian Regional Office

Phone: 1300 338 738

Email: [sevr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:sevr@education.vic.gov.au)

Refer to Appendix B for guidance on how to respond to a disclosure of child abuse.

## 2. Reporting to authorities and referring to services

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, the Principal or a member of the Leadership or Wellbeing Team, or the Child Safety Champion **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible.

The following steps will ensure our school complies with the four critical actions as well as additional actions required under the Child Safe Standards.

The Principal or a member of the Leadership or Wellbeing Team, or the Child Safety Champion must ensure:

- all relevant information is reported to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, Victoria Police or relevant services where required
- the incident is reported to the Department's [eduSafe Plus portal](#) or the Incident Support and Operations Centre (1800 126 126) in accordance with the severity rating outlined in the [Managing and Reporting School Incidents Policy](#)
- all [reportable conduct](#) allegations or incidents are reported by the Principal to the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (03 7022 0005) – where a reportable conduct allegation is made against the Principal, the Regional Director must be informed who will then make a report to Employee Conduct Branch

NOTE: In circumstances where staff members are legally required to report child abuse to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police and they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another person at the school or the designated member of school staff does not agree that a report needs to be made, the staff member who has formed the reasonable belief must still contact DFFH Child Protection and Victoria Police to make the report.

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



or The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support) DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

### **3. Contacting parents or carers**

The Principal or a member of the Leadership or Wellbeing Team, or the Child Safety Champion must ensure parents and carers are notified unless advised otherwise by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns in relation to informing parents/carers.

Principals may contact the Department of Education and Training Legal Division for advice on notifying parents and carers, and where relevant, the wider school community.

For further guidance, refer to [PROTECT Contacting parents and carers](#)

### **4. Ongoing protection and support**

The Principal or a member of the Leadership or Wellbeing Team, or the Child Safety Champion must ensure appropriate steps are taken by the school to protect the child and other children from any continued risk of abuse. These steps must be taken in consultation with any relevant external agency or Department staff such as DFFH Child Protection, Victoria Police, Legal Division or Employee Conduct Branch. Ongoing protection will also include further reports to authorities if new information comes to light or further incidents occur.

Appropriate, culturally sensitive and ongoing support must be offered and provided to all affected students. Ongoing support will be based on any available advice from the Department, parents and carers, health practitioners, and other authorities (such as DFFH or Victoria Police) and may include referral to wellbeing professionals, development of a safety plan, student support group meetings, and, for student to student incidents, behaviour management and support measures.

### **5. Recordkeeping**

The Principal or a member of the Leadership or Wellbeing Team, or the Child Safety Champion will ensure that:

- detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion are taken using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) or the [Responding to Student Sexual Offending: template](#) including, where possible, by the staff member or volunteer who reported the incident, disclosure, or suspicion to them
- detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by the school to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion
- all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion, including the schools immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely in a restricted access, locked, confidential file.

## **For school visitors and school community members**

All community members aged 18 years or over have legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse – refer to Appendix A for detailed information.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details, refer to the [Four Critical Actions](#).

Members of the community do not have to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to DFFH Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken

## Additional requirements for all staff

All staff play an important role in supporting student safety and wellbeing and have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in the above procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse. This means that if, after following the actions outlined in the procedure, a staff member reasonably believes that a child remains at risk of abuse, they must take the following steps:

- if they are concerned that the school has not taken reasonable steps to prevent or reduce the risk, raise these concerns with the Principal or Child Safety Champion in the first instance, and escalate to the regional office if they remain unsatisfied.
- report the matter to the relevant authorities where they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another staff member

Staff must refer to Appendix A for further information on their obligations relating to reporting to authorities.

## COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on our [school's website](#)
- Included in staff induction processes and annual staff training
- Included in volunteer induction processes and training for relevant volunteers
- Discussed at annual staff briefings or meetings
- Included in Staff Friendly Child Safety Folder
- Hard copy available from the Office upon request

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following Department of Education and Training policies and guidance are relevant to this policy:

- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#)
- [Managing and Reporting School Incidents](#)
- [Reportable Conduct](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)
- [Identify child abuse](#)
- [Report child abuse in schools \(including four critical actions\)](#)
- [Identify and respond to student sexual offending](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this policy:

- [Bullying Prevention Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning Policy](#)
- [Inclusion and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Visitors Policy](#)
- [Volunteers Policy](#)

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	Sept 2022
Consultation	The review includes input from the school council as representative of the Guthridge Primary School community.
Approved by	School Council and Emily Streitberg - Principal
Approved on	17/10/2022
Next scheduled review date	Prior to October 2024

## APPENDIX A

### LEGAL OBLIGATIONS RELATING TO REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

The following information outlines the various legal obligations relating to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

It is important to note that the procedures outlined in the above policy ensure compliance with the below reporting obligations, and also include additional steps to ensure compliance with Department policy and our school's duty of care obligations.

#### **Mandatory reporting to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection**

The following individuals are mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic):

- registered teachers and early childhood teachers (including principals and school staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT)
- school counsellors including staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing, including (but not limited to) school health and wellbeing staff, primary welfare coordinators, student wellbeing coordinators, mental health practitioners, chaplains, and Student Support Services staff
- nurses
- registered psychologists
- police officers
- registered medical practitioners
- out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
- early childhood workers
- youth justice workers
- people in religious ministry
- midwives

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse; and
- the child's parents or carers have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Guthridge Primary School to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the principal or any other mandatory reporter does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

If charged with not making a mandatory report, it may be a defence for the person charged to prove that they honestly and reasonably believed that all of the reasonable grounds for their belief had been the subject of a report to child protection made by another person.

The identity of a person who reports any protective concerns to DFFH Child Protection is protected by law. It is an offence for a person, other than the person who made the report, to disclose the name of the person who made a report or any information that is likely to lead to their identification.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module* annually. We also encourage all other staff to undertake this module, even where they are not mandatory reporters.

The policy of the Department of Education and Training (DET) requires **all staff** who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to discuss their concerns with the school leadership team and to report their concerns to DFFH and in some circumstances to Victoria Police, or to ensure that all the information relevant to the report has been made by another school staff member.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection even if they are not a mandatory reporter listed above.

### Reporting student wellbeing concerns to Child FIRST/Orange Door

At Guthridge Primary School the Wellbeing Team can make a referral to Child FIRST/Orange Door as when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST/Orange Door see the Policy and Advisory Library: [Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#).

### Reportable Conduct

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is focused on worker and volunteer conduct and how organisations investigate and respond to suspected child abuse. The scheme aims to improve organisational responses to suspected child abuse and to facilitate the identification of individuals who pose a risk of harm to children.

There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*:

- sexual offences against, with or in the presence of, a child
- sexual misconduct (which includes grooming) against, with or in the presence of, a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of, a child
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

A reportable conduct allegation is made where a person makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief, that a worker or volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that **may** involve reportable conduct.

If school staff or volunteers become aware of reportable conduct by any current or former employee, contractor or volunteer, they must notify the school principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the principal, they must notify the Regional Director.

The principal or regional director must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former employees of the school (including Department, allied health, casual and school council employees), contractors and volunteers (including parent volunteers).

- Employee Conduct Branch: 03 7022 0005 or [employee.conduct@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:employee.conduct@education.vic.gov.au)

The Department's Secretary, through the Manager, Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

For more information about reportable conduct see the Department's *Policy and Advisory Library*: [Reportable Conduct](#) and the Commission for Children and Young People's [website](#).

## Failure to disclose offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (ie persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 in Victoria.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000, local police station or the Police Assistance Line 131 444) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

"Reasonable excuse" is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed to Victoria Police and you have no further information to add (for example, through a mandatory report to DFFH Child Protection or a report to Victoria Police from another member of school staff).

## Failure to protect offence

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult (ie persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

## Further information

For more information about the offences and reporting obligations outlined in this fact sheet refer to: [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#).

## APPENDIX B: MANAGING DISCLOSURES OF CHILD ABUSE

### Important information for staff

#### ***When managing a disclosure relating to child abuse you should:***

- listen to the student and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals, and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you")
- Take prompt action in relation to following the procedures outlined below.

#### ***When managing a disclosure you should AVOID:***

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making any promises you will keep the information the student provided confidential
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).