

# CHILD SAFE STANDARDS POLICY AND CODE OF CONDUCT

## INTRODUCTION

Pakenham Lakeside Primary School (PLPS) places the highest priority on ensuring its commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all students is met by all relevant staff and adults.

## CONTEXT

The development of Child Safe Standards is part of the Victorian Government's response to the findings of the Betrayal of Trust inquiry into the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Interim Report 2015. The report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The PLPS Child Safe Standards policy sets out how our school approaches the development and sustainability of a child safe organisation where children are safe and feel safe. It also articulates our commitment to the Child safe Standards.

All people who enter our school community including staff, volunteers and contractors are covered by this policy and it applies across a range of school forums, both real and virtual.

## THE STANDARDS

### Standard no. 1

*There are strategies to embed an organisational culture of student safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.*

Our organisational culture is reflected in the behaviours and attitudes that illustrate what our school's core values look and sound like. These values underpin what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by people. This incorporates a zero tolerance of child abuse. These behaviours and attitudes are also clearly articulated in our Staff Code of Conduct.

We respect cultural diversity, including child rearing practices due to a family's personal, cultural or religious beliefs. However, as a child safe organisation, we recognise these differences do not reduce a child's right to be safe or our school's responsibility to protect the child from harm.

Each Aboriginal child needs to feel that their sense of self is valued and appreciated by the people around them and the environment they experience. Our curriculum planning provides opportunities to learn about and be respectful of Aboriginal culture and plays a key role in developing a culturally safe environment.

Our school takes a proactive approach to ensuring there is an inclusive environment beneficial to all, including those children with special needs or a disability. There is zero tolerance towards any form of discrimination. Our school is responsive regarding the implementation of any specific measures required to support the effective and safe participation of these students.

School leadership model and implement this standard and it is a key component of our school induction process. Information is regularly communicated to our community regarding child safe standards.

The school lead for child safety falls within the realm of the PLPS Executive's role, overseen by the Principal class team. They will:

- provide authoritative advice
- raise awareness of issues associated with child safe environment standards
- train and skill up staff in required processes and strategies.

## Standard no. 2

*There is a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.*

### A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

PLPS places the highest priority on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children. This is the primary focus through which we view most of our decision making.

PLPS has zero tolerance for child abuse.

PLPS is committed to listening to children and ensuring their voices and opinions are heard about decisions that impact upon their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

All employees at PLPS have a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play, both individually and collectively to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of all children is at the forefront of all that they do and the decisions they make. Key actions and strategies that reflect our approach at PLPS are:

- We take a proactive and preventative approach to all issues that have the potential to impact on child safety
- We value student voice and feedback and encourage students to participate in decisions that impact upon their lives and learning
- We respect and appreciate cultural diversity whilst always keeping child safety at the forefront of our decision making
- We inform and provide guidance to all employees and visitors regarding appropriate conduct and behaviour with and towards children
- We ensure students have a forum or avenue and feel comfortable within this environment to raise any issue that is worrying them or making them feel unsafe, with a trusted adult
- We report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- We share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of students is at risk
- We value the input of and maintain open communication channels with families, parents and carers.

## Standard no. 3

*There is a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.*

This outlines expected and appropriate standards of behaviour by adults towards children. It aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. It also supports staff by providing guidance on how best to support children. All staff and volunteers are expected to comply and promote the safety and wellbeing of students by adhering to the Code of Conduct. (Appendix no. 1)

#### Standard no. 4

*The school has screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.*

PLPS applies rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and strives to employ the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. Our job description and application clearly articulates:

- our organisational context
- duties and tasks associated with the role
- qualifications, attributes and characteristics that potential applicants should possess
- the level of responsibility associated with the position.

All applicants will be informed regarding the child safety practices at PLPS.

There is a clear statement in all job advertisements regarding the child safety requirements of the role and what is expected of the successful applicant.

Our interview phase assesses applicants who will best fit our school's needs and the carrying out of reference checks completes the process.

When staff take up their positions, there is a stated expectation that they will continue to pursue improvement in their professional capacity, incorporating knowledge and content, as well as pedagogical strategies and skills. Staff also continue to receive ongoing training in other areas of compliance that are associated with their roles and responsibilities, some of which contribute to the maintenance of a child safe environment.

#### Standard no. 5

*There are processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (DET Mandatory Reporting policy)*

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>

PLPS has clear expectations for staff and volunteers who wish to make a report about a child who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to DHHS Child Protection and informing a member of the principal class or the school executive of their concerns and the reasons behind those concerns.

#### Standard no. 6

*There are strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.*

PLPS believes the safety and wellbeing of children is paramount and is vigilant in ensuring rigorous risk management processes. This includes the following steps:

- Identify the school's child safety risk across the range of school environments, including excursions, sporting events and school camps
- Identify any existing risk mitigation measures and any internal or external controls
- Assess and rate child safety risks, taking into account the likelihood of the risk and the likely consequences
- Implement the decision or outcome from the above process.

Effective risk management processes are dynamic and can change over time as new risks arise and others may no longer be relevant. We recognise there are potential risks and are proactive by undertaking preventative measures.

### Standard no. 7

*There are strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children. (PLPS Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy)*

PLPS has developed a comprehensive Student Engagement policy which provides the basis on which we have developed and maintained a safe, supportive and inclusive school environment.

This document also articulates the expectations and aspirations of our school community in relation to student engagement, bullying, behaviour and school attendance.

Our school endeavours to provide an evidence-based approach to developing social and emotional learning skills and enhancing resilience.

PLPS has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students to have a voice. Foremost in ensuring this is the major focus on ensuring that teachers place the highest priority on forging positive relationships with our students which are characterised by trust, respect and openness.

Conversations that can facilitate a sense of empowerment in our children can be based around:

- Children's views about when they feel safe and unsafe
- Providing students with an insight about the standard of care you can provide as a teacher
- Teaching children how to raise concerns or let someone know when they feel unsafe.

Students have a variety of forums where they are able to provide feedback to home group teachers, year level teams and school leadership, on a number of areas of the school's operations. This student voice is a crucial and valued source of data that is incorporated into our strategic planning and decision-making processes.

The desired outcome is that all of our children feel valued, respected and cared for. They know they can speak to a trusted adult who will address their concerns.

### CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of information about children and their families is of the utmost importance in any processes or dealings in relation to the effective implementation of the Child Safe Standards.

### POLICY EVALUATION AND REVIEW

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.

## GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Term	Meaning under ministerial Order No. 870
ETR Act	The Education and Training Reform Act (2006) and any subsequent amendments.
Child	A child enrolled as a student at a school.
Child-connected work	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.
Child abuse	This includes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any act committed against a child involving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a sexual offence</li> <li>- an offence under Section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act (grooming); and</li> </ul> </li> <li>• the infliction on a child of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- physical violence; or</li> <li>- serious emotional or psychological harm</li> <li>- serious neglect of a child</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Child safety	Encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
Minister of religion	Has the same meaning as in the Working With Children Act, 2005.
Proprietor	In relation to a school, means the person who is ultimately responsible for the way the school is managed and conducted; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in the case of a government school the secretary of DET</li> </ul>
School environment	Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a campus of the school</li> <li>• online school environment (including email and intranet systems)</li> <li>• other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including without limitation locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events)</li> </ul>
School governing authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor</li> <li>• The governing body for a school, as authorised by the proprietor or the ETR Act</li> <li>• The principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act</li> </ul> <p>Note: There is a wide variety of school governance arrangements. Depending on the way a school is constituted and operated, the governing body for a school may be the school board, school council, or some other person or entity. The school governing authorities may share or assign responsibility for discharging the requirements imposed by</p>

	this Order, in accordance with the school's internal governance arrangements.
School staff	<p>In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employed under Part 2.4 of the ETR Act in the government teaching service</li> <li>• employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act</li> <li>• a volunteer or contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)</li> </ul>

The following terms have the same meaning as in the ETR Act:

- child abuse
- government school
- government teaching service
- non-government school
- parent
- principal
- registered school
- school
- the Secretary.

## APPENDIX 1 PLPS STAFF CHILD SAFE CODE

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. All staff at PLPS are expected to comply and promote the safety and wellbeing of our children by:

- adhering to our Child Safe Environment policy and other relevant policies
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating all children with respect, including listening to and valuing their ideas and opinions
- welcoming all children and their families and carers and being inclusive with our school community
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of ATSI students and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- modelling appropriate adult behaviours and attitudes regarding Child Safety standards
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you they or another child has been abused or they are concerned about their safety/the safety of another child
- understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations, including mandatory reporting, as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
- working with children in an open and transparent way – other adults should always know about the work you are doing with children
- respecting the privacy of children and their families, and only disclosing information to people who have a need to know on a professional basis.

All staff and volunteers must NOT:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or incidents of child abuse
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational or service delivery context
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to “grooming” behaviour eg. offering gifts
- treat a child unfavourably on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance or delivering the educational curriculum
- exchange personal contact information such as phone numbers, social networking sites or email addresses with students except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- have unauthorised contact with children online or by phone
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where they are required for duty of care purposes
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to any school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

*This Child Safe Standards Policy and Code of Conduct was endorsed by PLPS Council on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and will be reviewed if legislative or other changes are required in the interim or no later than December, 2021.*