

Child Safe Policy

Our commitment to child safety

Carnegie Primary School is committed to child safety. All students, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

We want students to be safe and empowered in an inclusive environment. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously, consistent with our policies and procedures.

Carnegie Primary School is committed to:

- preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks
- ensuring human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers are consistent with DET policy
- regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- Complying with our legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when we are concerned about a student's safety
- the cultural safety of Aboriginal students, the cultural safety of students from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for students with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

The Principal, Assistant Principal and the Student Wellbeing Leader are responsible for leading the development of a culture of child safety and are the first point of call for concerns regarding student safety.

Please refer to the 'Mandatory Reporting and Child in Need of Protection Process' document housed in the principal's office and located on the school website if you believe there is an immediate risk.

Our students

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Carnegie Primary School. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance at Carnegie Primary School, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by the applicable DE&T and VIT codes of conduct and Carnegie Primary School policies and procedures which specifies the standards of conduct when working with students.

Child safe Processes and procedures at Carnegie Primary School

1. Training and supervision

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

We aim to ensure all staff and volunteers feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns with the Principal, Assistant Principal or Student Wellbeing Leader.

We ensure appropriate PD and resources are available to ensure our staff are able to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

All registered teachers undertake annual Mandatory Reporting DET Professional Development Online Learning modules and Assessment.

2. Recruitment

The quality of the workforce is the major factor driving improvement in schools. The Department supports a culture of leadership, learning and renewal in all workplaces with opportunities for career development and advancement. Excellent service provision can only happen when the right people are attracted, recruited, and supported to do their jobs as effectively as possible. We take all reasonable steps to employ highly skilled professional people to work with students.

We follow the DET guidelines in relation to recruitment. Carnegie Primary School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work at Carnegie Primary School, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check before commencing work.

3. Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

As a school we will respond to any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools : Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse. A brochure outlining actions will be housed in the office and placed on our website. A summary of these actions is available at www.education.vic.gov.au/protect

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using the appropriate incident reporting template including investigation updates. All records are securely stored by the school.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

4. Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

5. Legislative responsibilities

Carnegie Primary School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock, out of bounds areas), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a student in organisations on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Carnegie Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to ensure allegations, concerns or complaints are investigated thoroughly and quickly by the appropriate people and in line with DET policies and procedures.

We ensure all staff know the procedures to follow as outlined in the Staff Handbook.

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a student states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the student may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

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Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) The child is in need of protection,
- (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",
- (c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

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 if:

- a) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abuse

Further information

For further information in relation to:

- Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools Four critical actions for schools
- Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse
- Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages>

Information on child safe standards can also be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations) <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations>

Registered schools can contact the Department of Education and Training:
child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au