

## 1. Policy Statement

**Village School is committed to promoting and protecting, at all times, the interests and safety of children involved in our programs. The protection of children and young persons is the responsibility of all who work at Village School this includes all staff, parents, volunteers and contractors. All share responsibility for promoting the wellbeing and safety of children.**

**Village School has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to acting in the best interests of children and keeping them safe. The School Board and the school community are entrusted to implementing the following child safe standards**

- a) Culture – Develop strategies to embed an organizational culture of child safety
- b) Policy – Develop a Child Safe Policy
- c) Policy – Develop a Child Safe Code of Conduct Policy
- d) Human Resources - Develop Recruitment practices, Training, Supervisory practices that adhere to the child safe standards
- e) Procedures – Develop procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- f) Risk – Develop strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- g) Participation – Develop strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

Village School will operate within a child safe environment, which falls under the Ministerial Order 870, and will continue to embed these important policies and procedures within our School community. Village School will incorporate annual review information, compliance with Standards, policy updates, training, and mandatory reporting requirements in the School's annual report.

### **PURPOSE**

Village School is committed to being a Child Safe organization and entrenching a child safe culture into our procedures and processes to ensure that all children who attend Village School are safe at all times.

All children regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse. Village School will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child protection policies

Village School supports and respects all children, staff, volunteers. Village School is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

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## 2. Application

This policy applies to all staff, parents, school board, volunteers, contractors and all members of Village School community

## 3. Definition of Terms

- a) Child – A child is defined as a person 16 years and under
- b) Child Protection – The Government Authority, which takes responsibility for the protection of children and to whom reports are made.
- c) DHS – Department of Human Services

Refer to 12.1 A - Child Protection Manual for further definitions.

## 4. Responsibility

### 4.1 BOARD

- a) The Board of Village School has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place.
- b) The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

### 4.2 PRINCIPAL

The Principal of Village School is responsible for:

- a) Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- b) Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- c) Ensuring that all adults within the Village School community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- d) Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- e) Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

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**4.3 STAFF**

- a) All staff share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:
- b) Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Village School's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- c) Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state- based child protection service) and fulfill their obligations as mandatory reporters;
- d) Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation); and
- e) Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety
- f) Follow the School's Child Safe Code of Conduct

**4.4 PARENTS, GUARDIANS, VOLUNTEERS, CONTRACTORS**

- a) Be aware of the School's Child Safe Policy and Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection Manual
- b) Understand their obligation to report a reasonable belief of a child sexual offence to the Principal so that a report may be made to the Police

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## 5. Child Safety Officers

Village School has nominated two Child Safety Officers:

- ✓ Ashley Penny (Principal)
- ✓ Melissa Langford (Teacher)

The Child Safety Officers are able to act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety and liaise with the Principal and the staff team to maintain the visibility of child safety.

Staff are encouraged to discuss with one of the Child Safety Officers should they hold any concerns relating to child safety.

## 6. Authorisation

The Principal authorises any investigations into child protection issues.

## 7. Procedures

### Support for the child.

Support for the student that is the cause for concern, and anyone else affected, should be arranged. The School should be aware that a wide range of people may be affected. Support should continue to be provided if necessary, as the role of the staff member with the student **and Child Protection Services may be ongoing.**

Village School is mindful of the different cultures of the children in the school, including students of Indigenous descent, and the need to be mindful of these differences when responding to and supporting the children who may be at risk. Staff also need to be aware of other support agencies from these communities.

Village School is also aware that extra care and vigilance may need to be taken with children who are disabled and are more reliant on adult care, particularly physical care.

Village School has developed the Child Protection Manual to assist everyone to properly respond to any allegations of child abuse or misconduct.

Refer to 12.1 A - Child Protection Manual for assistance with appropriate procedures.

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## 8. Additional Provisions

### a) Employment of New Staff / Volunteers

Village School undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all staff and volunteers which aims to:

- i) Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the School;
- ii) Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Village School's values and commitment to protect children; and
- iii) Prevent a person from working at Village School if they pose a risk to children.
- iv) Village School requires all staff / volunteers to pass through the School's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with Village School.
- v) Persons applying for a role as a teacher with the Village School must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching
- vi) Village School will require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at Village School and during their time with Village School at regular intervals. Village School will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure. Once engaged, staff/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

### b) Training of Staff and Board Members

All staff and board members will receive annual training which will address:

- i) The individual and collective obligations of both the board and the school staff as regards to managing the risks of child abuse
- ii) The need to monitor the school environment, both physically and socially in order to manage risks of child abuse
- iii) The need for board members to be conversant with all current child safety standards.
- iv) The need to monitor Village School practices to ensure child safe procedures are followed.

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**9. Reference Documents**

Village School Policies	Agreements, Acts & Regulations
Child Protection Policy	Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
Child Safety Code of Conduct	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
Child Safe Standards	Victorian Child Safe Standards
Recruitment Policy	Privacy Act
Privacy Policy	Ministerial Order 870
Confidentiality Policy	
Child Protection Manual	