



CHILD SAFE STANDARD 7: STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE CHILD PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

PURPOSE

The purpose of Broadmeadows Valley Primary School's (BVPS) Policy-Child Safe Standard 7 Strategies to Promote Child Participation and Empowerment is aimed at enabling all children and young people to feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse.

Empowerment and participation are not a one-off event, it is an approach that aims to be embedded in the organisational culture at BVPS. Participation is important for children because it gives them an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that affect them. Children are more likely to voice their concerns about feeling unsafe, or make a complaint, if they feel their views are valued and welcomed.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to school council members where indicated. This policy will apply to the school environment (refer to Definitions section) and covers both school and outside of school hours.

DEFINITIONS:

The Act: Child Safety and Well Being Act 2005

Child or young person: A person who is under the age of 18 years.

Aboriginal Child: A person under the age of 18 who: is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Community

Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds: A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis

Child Safe Organisation: In the context of the child safe standards, a child safe organisation is one that meets the child safe standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse

Cultural Competency: A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations

Cultural Abuse: Actions and attitudes that deliberately ignore denigrate or attack the culture of a person or community. The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. A culturally safe environment does not ignore, challenge or deny cultural identity

Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children: Cultural safety upholds the rights of Aboriginal children to:

- Identify as Aboriginal without fear of retribution or questioning
- Have an education that strengthens their culture and identity maintain connections to their land and country maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders
- Receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner. Be involved in services that are culturally respectful

Cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds: An environment, which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need. Efforts need to be made to ensure the culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and their families receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner, including in relevant community languages

Children with a Disability: A disability can be any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury, intellectual disability, or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with a disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden

Organisation: The *Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005* (the Act) will provide that the standards apply to 'applicable entities', which are defined in the Act as: an unincorporated body or association (however structured) an individual who carries on a business and engages contractors, employees or volunteers to assist in the business in providing services or facilities

Child Abuse: For the purposes of these standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving: physical violence, sexual offences, grooming, serious emotional or psychological abuse or serious neglect. For further information regarding child abuse refer: Ministerial Order 870-Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools 2016

Child physical abuse: Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour. (Safe Schools Hub)

Child sexual abuse: Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e., a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can also be:

- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g., a teacher); the age of consent laws does not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated
- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion
- sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion
- non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g., a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse. (Safe Schools Hub)

Child-connected work: Child-connected work means work authorised by the school, school council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present

Child safety: 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

Child protection: Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm.

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners. (Safe Schools Hub)

Reasonable Belief: When staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. 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.

School environment: School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, homestays, and other school activities or events)

School staff: School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed by the Department of Education and Training
- directly engaged or employed by a school council, or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

POLICY

Empowering children and young people and facilitating their participation enhances their safety. In Victoria, mandatory Child Safe Standards have been introduced to help protect children and young people from abuse in organisations.

Children often do not report abuse because they feel uncomfortable or they do not know how to raise their concerns or allegations of abuse. BVPS aims to implement simple and accessible processes that will assist children to understand their rights and understand how to report concerns regarding their safety. Through this Policy we aim to clearly demonstrate that children have a right to be listened to, be heard and feel and be safe.

Implementation Guidelines

Broadmeadows Valley Primary School staff will promote child safety and empowerment by: -

- Providing children with age appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy.

- Understanding that no one has a right to injure them, and how they can raise concerns about abuse. Information can be included in our welcome packs, information sessions and posters, as well as on the school website.
- Ensuring information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children. Broadmeadows Valley Primary School has policies and procedures that are able to be accessed and understood by children with a disability.
- Ensuring information and processes for reporting concerns are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal children. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation to review information and processes.
- Ensuring Aboriginal children are accepted when identifying as Aboriginal, and that staff and volunteers understand appropriate responses to children identifying as Aboriginal.
- Considering access and culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability when drafting communications materials.
- Ensuring information and processes for reporting concerns are culturally appropriate for children from non-English speaking backgrounds. A way to help ensure this will include engaging with parents and external agencies.
- Translating school information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages, including relevant Aboriginal languages where appropriate.
- Ensuring services are accessible for people with a disability, for example provide appropriate communication aids such as hearing loops if required.
- Gathering feedback from children, for example through surveys, focus groups and story time about whether they would feel safe and taken seriously if they were to raise concerns. Implement improvements based on this feedback.
- Enabling children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe practices used in the school. Acknowledge, use and act on their feedback where possible. For example, views and expressions could be harnessed via classroom activities involving feedback sessions or more privately through suggestion boxes.
- Training relevant staff and volunteers on methods of empowering children and encouraging children's participation.
- Encouraging participation and empowerment of children in other school activities, such as the BVPS Young Leaders Program and other decision-making forums that champion student voice and leadership.
- Raising awareness in the community about children's rights, for example through staff conversations with families and communications such as websites, displaying posters children have designed and newsletters.

Participation and empowerment are vital components to ensure that the BVPS Child Safe standards are implemented effectively so that our programs benefit children, families, organisations and staff. We plan to implement this policy by: -

- Involving and consulting with children in order to improve our policies, children provide a unique voice regarding what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- Facilitating the empowerment and participation of children to enhance a culture of child safety
- Aiming for children and young people to learn new skills, build self-esteem and develop an understanding of collaboration and rights.
- Ensuring that children feel their views are valued and listened to, at BVPS we believe that children will be more likely to support the outcome if they have been involved

A PROTECT “Feeling Safe-Fact Sheet” is included as an attachment with this policy, where appropriate it may be used as a guide with students when discussing concepts relating to feeling safe. **(Attachment 1)**

Health Education Policies

BVPS will develop health education policies to support the health messages being delivered within the classroom and with school community input including students, parents and teachers. All school staff must:

- be conscious of issues related to the disclosure of personal information
- give careful consideration prior to approval of collection of sensitive information
- not promote their own personal preferences
- select health education materials with care

Successful Implementation of this standard will be evident at BVPS when the following is in place:

- Reporting procedures for when a child feels unsafe are accessible for all children.
- Children understand what child abuse is, and their rights (age appropriate).
- Children understand how to report an allegation of abuse or concern for their safety, e.g., to the school, a trusted adult and external bodies (for example, the police).
- Children demonstrate they feel safe, empowered and taken seriously if they raise concerns.
- Children demonstrate they feel empowered to contribute to the school’s commitment to child safety.
- Evidence of children’s reports or concerns are responded to appropriately.
- All staff understand and promote the BVPS child safe organisational culture and understand how to empower children and encourage their participation.

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 staff training
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

Gerison Lansdown *Promoting children’s participation in democratic decision-making* February 2001, <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf>

Moore, T., McArthur, M., Noble-Carr, D., & Harcourt, D., 2015, *Taking us seriously: children and young people talk about safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns*, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne (funded by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commissioned) <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/getattachment/33a95fc9-0e8d-41da-ac9f-31f625794d4f/Taking-Us-Seriously>

Western Australia Commissioner for Children and Young People *Involving Children and Young People: Participation Guidelines* <<http://www.ccp.wa.gov.au/files/Participation%20Guidelines.pdf>> and <http://www.ccp.wa.gov.au/files/CHECKLIST%20Participation%20Guidelines-%20.pdf>

Commissioner for Children Tasmania, *involving children in decision making; Your quick, practice guide June 2015* <http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Guide-to-making-decisions-booklet.pdf>

Resources to support healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)

Respectful Relationships Education: focuses on helping students in Prep to Year 10 challenge negative attitudes such as discrimination and harassment that can lead to violence, often against women. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/respectrel.aspx>

Sexuality education: Comprehensive, inclusive sexuality education is a compulsory part of a school's health education curriculum, taught and assessed by teachers. The promotion of sexual health is a responsibility shared between schools, the local health and welfare community, and parents. School-based sexuality education programs are more effective when they are developed in consultation with parents and the local community. Learning and teaching in sexuality education should be developmentally appropriate. Schools must support and respect sexuality diversity including same sex attraction. See: Supporting Diversity in Schools (PDF - 119Kb) (pdf - 119.04kb). For more information re sexuality education see: Catching On-line. For sexuality diversity inclusion in sexuality education ref Supporting Diversity in Schools (PDF - 119Kb) (pdf - 119.04kb)

Mental Health Promotion: All health education learning and teaching programs should aim to build student resilience and peer support practices to promote a student's ability to look after oneself, recognise and be aware of one's needs in others, and awareness of appropriate supports in school and in the community. Promoting Healthy Minds for Living and Learning web page provides materials to support school staff create environments conducive to mental health. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/health/Pages/earlychildhood.aspx>

Safe Schools Hub for Students: Students have their own Safe Schools site, with carefully selected, age-appropriate online resources to engage them in the challenge of creating safe places to learn and grow. <http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/home>

Healthy Together Achievement Program: An initiative to support schools to create healthier environments for learning. This includes supporting the health and wellbeing of students, staff and families through learning, policies, creating a healthy physical and social environment, and developing community links and partnerships. <http://www.achievementprogram.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/>

KidsMatter: Provides methods, tools and support to help schools work with parents and carers, health services and the wider community, to nurture happy, balanced kids. <http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary>

Building Resilience: A Model to Support Children and Young People provides an evidence-based approach to developing social and emotional learning skills and enhancing resilience. It recommends taking a multi-dimensional, school-wide approach to supporting resilience and engagement, which has a positive impact on social and academic outcomes.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/resilienceframework.aspx>

Resources to support child abuse awareness and prevention

Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum: The Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum was developed by Queensland’s Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) in partnership with the Daniel Morcombe Foundation. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development partnered with DETE to make the Curriculum available for use in Victorian schools. Consists of classroom lessons across three levels: Prep - Year 2, Years 3-6 and Years 7-9. It aims to teach children about personal safety, including cybersafety and phone safety, and focuses on three key safety messages: Recognise, React and Report. Parent guides have also been developed to inform parents about the Curriculum and help them reinforce the key safety messages at home. Ref- <https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/pages/Teacher.aspx> (Edumail password is required for accessing Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum)

Child Wise Personal Safety: The aim of the Personal Safety education program is to teach children and young people how to be more assertive and resilient to risks.

<http://www.childwise.org.au/page/21/wise-child-protective-behaviours>

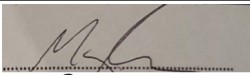
DET’s Risk Rating Matrix: Used to combine consequence with likelihood to determine the overall level of risk.

| Risk Rating Matrix | | Consequence | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|--------|----------|---------|---------|
| | | Insignificant | Minor | Moderate | Major | Severe |
| Likelihood | Almost Certain | Medium | High | Extreme | Extreme | Extreme |
| | Likely | Medium | Medium | High | Extreme | Extreme |
| | Possible | Low | Medium | Medium | High | Extreme |
| | Unlikely | Low | Low | Medium | Medium | High |
| | Rare | Low | Low | Low | Medium | Medium |

EVALUATION AND RATIFICATION

The BVPS Child Safe Standard 7: Strategies to Promote Child Participation and Empowerment will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle or *before in line with DET requirements or mandates. Amendments to this policy will be made in consultation with staff, students and the school community. Broadmeadows Valley Primary School will monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and revise the policy at least once every three years.

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| POLICY | Child Safe Standard 7: Strategies to Promote Child Participation and Empowerment |
| BVPS | |

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| Council President | Signed:  |
| BVPS Principal | Signed: <u>C. Ziano</u> |
| Reviewed | August 2021 |
| Ratified | / /2021 |

*Schools should be aware of the following message posted on the **Commission for Children and Young People** website. *“New Child Safe Standards are being developed to better protect children and young people from abuse. The Victorian Government has announced that the new Standards will commence on **1 July 2022**, giving organisations time to plan, prepare and comply. The eleven new Standards will replace Victoria’s current seven standards and principles.”* Please note that at the time of developing the BVPS Child Safe Policies, the revised standards were not as yet available.



Attachment 1: Child Safe Standard 7

Feeling Safe and Being Safe Information for Primary School Children

GET THE FACTS

This fact sheet is about making sure you know how to keep safe. It gives you the facts about what to do if someone is hurting you or your friends or making you feel unsafe.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?

- Everyone has the right to feel safe and be protected.
- No one is allowed to threaten you, hurt you or touch you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- No one should behave in a way that makes you feel unsafe or afraid, including anyone in your family, anyone at school or anywhere else in the community.

HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMETHING IS WRONG?

- Every relationship should be respectful.
- It is wrong for anyone to hurt you or make you feel unsafe, uncomfortable or afraid.
- Remember a person doesn't have to physically hurt or touch you to be doing the wrong thing.
- Even if you are not sure, if something doesn't feel right you should tell an adult who can help you.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FEEL UNSAFE?

- Tell an adult – telling someone won't get you in trouble.
- If you feel threatened, unsafe, or if you feel uncomfortable about how someone is touching, talking to you, or treating you, you should tell a trusted adult.
- You can tell a teacher or any adult at your school. They will be able to help you.
- You can also tell your parent, carer, or any family member or adult you trust.
- Even if the person who is making you feel like this has asked you not to tell anyone, you should still talk to an adult. It is more important that you are safe and protected.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM WORRIED THAT SOMEONE, I KNOW IS UNSAFE?

- Tell an adult you trust.
- You can tell a teacher or any adult at your school.
- They will be able to help your friend or the person you are worried about.
- You can also tell your parent, carer, or any family member or adult that you trust.
- Even if the person who you are worried about has asked you not to tell anyone, you should still talk to an adult. It is more important to make sure that your friend is safe and protected.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TELL AN ADULT AT THE SCHOOL THAT I FEEL UNSAFE, OR THAT I THINK MY FRIEND IS UNSAFE?

- Adults at your school must listen to your concerns and help.
- In some cases, the adult at school may need to tell another adult about your concerns so that you, or the person you know can be protected.
- Adults at your school can provide you with support and make sure that you don't have to deal with this alone.

WHAT IF I DON'T FEEL LIKE I CAN TALK TO ANYONE AT MY SCHOOL?

- If you don't feel like you can talk to an adult at your school, you can talk to your parent or carer.
- If you don't feel like you can talk to your parent or carer, you can talk to another adult within your family. This may be an aunt, uncle, a stepparent, or a grandparent.
- If you don't feel like you can talk to any of these adults, you should still try and find an adult that you can trust, and that you can talk to.
- You don't need to deal with things on your own.

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP YOU. HERE ARE SOME OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- visit eHeadspace (which provides an online and a 9am-1am telephone support service) www.eheadspace.org.au or 1800 650 850
- call Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800 or visit for 24-hour support
- call or visit your local police station or call 000

