

CHILD SAFETY POLICY



PURPOSE

Newmark Primary (the school) is committed to creating and maintaining a school in which all children are safe from harm. Newmark Primary has a zero tolerance of child abuse.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 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.

PRINCIPLES

- The school, those that work in it and its wider community together have a duty of care to protect children from harm through abuse or neglect.
- The school is committed to ensure that this duty is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of the school and that children are safe.
- In discharging its duty of care, the school is committed to take account of the diversity of all students, including the needs of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.

AIMS

- To protect students in the school's care from abuse
- To create and maintain a culture of child protection within the school and its community
- To comply with the specific requirements as set out in Ministerial Order 1359

LEGAL AND REGULATORY BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE

- Duty of Care
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 (Vic.)
- Ministerial Order 1359 Jan 2022 (Vic.)
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards: mandated registration requirements
- Crimes Act 1958 (amended) (Vic.)
- Betrayal of Trust Report 2014 (Vic.)
- Working With Children Act 2005

SCOPE

This policy applies to members of the school board (as individual members of the board as well as to the board as an entity), the principal, all school staff, volunteers and contracted service providers working in the school environment.

This policy 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.

This policy should be read together with the school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes (see the Related Policies section below).

KEY DEFINITIONS

Duty of Care refers to the obligation of all staff working with students to take reasonable steps to protect them from reasonably foreseeable harm.

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 abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence; or
 - an offence under section 498 of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
 - serious neglect of a child.

Child means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child-Connected Work means work authorised by or on behalf of the school board and performed by an adult in the school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child-Related Work: Work that usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child (including oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact) that is a central part of that person's duties. Child-related work may be either paid or unpaid (voluntary). It does not include work that involves only occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to that person's work.

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

- a campus of the school;
- online school environments (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools and online services); and
- other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Newmark Primary 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 Board

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

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community;
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school board meetings;
- undertake annual training on child safety;
- act in accordance with the Child Safe Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school board;
- when looking for new directors, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe; and
- endorse child safe policies and codes, and oversee the implementation to manage risk of child abuse.

School Leadership Team

The school leadership team is 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.

The principal and lead team 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 and school board meetings;
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and responding to abuse; and
- 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 training provided by the school, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures;
- act in accordance with the school's child safe policies and codes;
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with the school's Reporting Obligations Policy, including following the Four Critical Actions;
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives;

- ensure students understand their right to be safe and protected; and
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

Specific Staff Child Safety Responsibilities

Newmark Primary has nominated Child Safety Officers (Principal and Leads) to support the implementation of the child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

Our Child Safety Officers are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

The school's Child Safe 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.

MANAGING RISKS TO CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

At Newmark Primary 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 Safe 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 Safe Risk Register at least annually.

Additional policies outlining the school's approach to child safety and wellbeing in both physical and online environments include, but are not limited to the Wellbeing Policy, Reporting Obligations Policy, Technology Policy and Protocols, Supervision Policy, Outings, Camps and Events Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy.

ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

At Newmark Primary, 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.

Our Wellbeing Policy outlines the strategies we use to promote cultural safety in our school community, it outlines the measures we have in place to maintain an inclusive and culturally safe school for Aboriginal students.

STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

To support child safety and wellbeing at Newmark Primary, 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 wellbeing programs

(such as morning huddle, campfire conversations, crews, reset and reflect), our behaviour management approach (based on restorative practice and emotion coaching), explicit teaching about emotions and relationships in our project ventures, our Child Safe Code of Conduct and our school values and cultural norms.

We inform students of their rights through our Me and My Relationships program 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 access information on how to report concerns as outlined in our Concerns and Complaints Policy on our website.

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/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 Newmark Primary 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. All of our child safety policies and procedures are available for students and parents/carers on our school website. PROTECT Child Safety posters are displayed across the school for students to see.

We 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 through our school intranet and community meetings/focus groups.

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; and
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Wellbeing Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy provide more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

SUITABLE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

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

Staff Recruitment

When recruiting staff, we incorporate child safe measures into the interview process and the employment agreement (contract). Before being offered employment the candidate must read and agree to follow all child safe policies and codes.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we sight, verify and record the employee's Victorian Teaching Registration and/or Working with Children Check. We collect and record:

- proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- the person's history of working with children; and
- references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff Training

All staff participate in our child safety and wellbeing training. This includes a focus on:

- understanding child safe policies, practices and codes;
- completing online training modules annually;
- understanding reporting obligations; and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Staff Supervision and Management

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

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school policies and 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 training, supervision and management.

Suitability of Contractors and Visitors

All contractors and visitors are required to comply with our Contractors and Visitors Policy, which outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing screening, induction, supervision and management.

CHILD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS

Staff and Volunteer Training

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.

Our staff 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; and
- 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.

School Board Training

To ensure our school board 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 school board will be trained at least annually. 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; and
- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES

Newmark Primary fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents/carers, 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 Concerns and Complaints Policy, which can be found on our school website.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all board members, staff and volunteers must follow our Reporting Obligations Policy. 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; or
- The Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending.

The school's Wellbeing Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy outline the school's response to physical violence or other harmful behaviours of students.

COMMUNICATIONS

Newmark Primary 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 Policy, Wellbeing Policy, Child Safe Code of Conduct and the Reporting Obligations Policy;
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school;
- sharing updates via the school's intranet; and
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school board meetings.

PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Newmark Primary collects, uses, and discloses information about students 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 the school's Privacy Policy.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The school acknowledges that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the school's Record Management Policy.

REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES

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

The school will:

- review and improve policies and practices every two years or after any significant child safety incident;
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice; and
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and community.

RELATED POLICIES

- Reporting Obligations Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy

- Technology Policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Outings, Camps and Events Policy
- Volunteers Policy
- Contractors and Visitors Policy
- Record Management Policy
- Privacy Policy

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Emergency and Critical Incidents Procedures

POLICY REVIEW

The school board and principal will review the Child Safety Policy every two years, or following a major incident. The review will include input from the school community including staff, students and parents/carers.

ENDORSEMENT

Updated date	March 2023
Consultation	School staff, student representative group, representative parent/carers group, school board
Endorsed by	School Board
Endorsed on	May 2023