



## **CHILD SAFETY POLICY**

The FCS Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

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.

A child is a person under 18 years of age.

### **Guidelines:**

The Child Safe Standards aim to:

- create a culture where protecting children from abuse is part of everyday thinking and practice in organisations.
- strengthen existing approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse and provide consistency in how these issues are managed.

### The 11 Child Safe Standards

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, the organisation must undertake the following:

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
4. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.
8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.



9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

The following principles must also be embedded within each standard:

- promoting the safety of Aboriginal children and young people
- promoting the safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children and young people with disabilities
- promoting the safety of children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- promoting the safety of international students
- promoting the safety of children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

FCS has a commitment to upholding Child Safe Standards and does so through the provision, adherence, monitoring and management of its policies and procedures in regards to child safety and welfare.

This policy covers all kinds of child abuse, including:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming;
- physical violence against a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child
- physical abuse
- family violence

This policy applies to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, school staff, visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment.

### **Strategies to embed a culture of child safety at Fitzroy Community School**

To comply with Standard 2 of Ministerial Order 1359, The school governing authority must

- (a) develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school
- (b) allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies
- (c) inform the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities
- (d) put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices; and
- (e) periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies



### **Leadership in a child safe environment to comply with the above Standard**

Fitzroy Community School will act to protect children from abuse, and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged in their daily learning and development. We do this by providing a culture of child safety embedded throughout our school so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice.

Our child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. At Fitzroy Community School, we foster a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour. All staff and volunteers must consider the safety of all children.

### **Procedure for maintaining sensitivity to the diversity characteristics of the school**

All child safety procedures are to be adapted in ways that respond to the diverse contexts and needs of the school community. The Child Safety Leaders can discuss with the mandatory reporter how to ensure sensitivity, and will communicate this necessity.

### **Governance in a child safe environment**

Leadership at Fitzroy Community School takes a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children in our school is of fundamental consideration in everything we do.

The Board will annually receive training as required under clause 12.2(e) of Ministerial Order 1359 on

- a. Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse
- b. Child abuse risks in the school environment
- c. The school's current child safety standards

### **Leadership responsibilities**

The Principal takes the lead in protecting children from abuse, and is aware of child abuse allegations and risks, and takes responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.



Fitzroy Community School will ensure that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.

### **School child safety leader role and responsibilities**

The School Child Safety Leader role is the Principal, who will undertake the role and accompanying responsibilities to ensure the school embeds a culture of child safety and is compliant with Ministerial Order 1359. The role includes:

- Providing authoritative advice:
  - Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
  - Maintain the visibility of child safety.
  - Lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.
- Raising awareness across the school including staff, students and teachers and others who come into contact with children in the school
  - Ensure the school's policies are known and used appropriately.
  - Ensure the school actions are reviewed as to the effectiveness of the strategies put into place and to revise accordingly.
  - Ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
  - Conduct regular briefing sessions for school staff members to ensure a high degree of awareness of the school's Child Safe Policy.
  - Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this. The policy will be uploaded onto the school's website and will be evaluated as part of the policy cycle for all school policies unless changes in the Ministerial Order dictates changes in the school's policy. The Child Safe Policy will be provided to all new families who come into the school at the time of enrolment.
  - Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers. The Child Safe Leader will be actively in communication with all teachers regarding potentially vulnerable and at risk children.
  - 'Child Safe' will be a standing item on the school board meetings to ensure the embedding a child safe culture in the school.



- Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.
- Work with teachers to include, where appropriate, supporting teaching points into curriculum programs
- The child safe leader will be trained and have capabilities to support the school to embed a child safe culture being authoritative in providing advice by:
  - Keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out regularly.
  - Having a working knowledge of how the Department of Families, Fairness and Health conducts a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
  - Keeping detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
  - Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's Child Safe Policy and procedures, especially new, part time staff and relief teachers.
  - Make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest departmental policies and guidance.

### **Communications**

Fitzroy Community School's Child Safety Leader will ensure Child Safe Policy information and procedures are available for everyone in the school community. Ways of disseminating information will include: Website, newsletters, parent meetings, staff meetings and staff emails.

### **Chosen suitable employees and volunteers**

Fitzroy Community School takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. These include:

- Selection criteria in job descriptions
- Police record and identity checks
- Working with Children Checks (as required by the Worker Screening Act 2020) where VIT registration does not cover an adult in the school
- Face-to-face interviews
- Detailed reference checks from previous employers

The FCS Recruitment and Onboarding Process is followed to ensure that these steps are taken.



### **Supported and trained staff**

Fitzroy Community School ensures that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their knowledge and understanding is developed to help protect children from abuse.

All staff will receive training or induction in relation to child safety practices, policies and procedures.

### **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

FCS is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of FCS will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide an inclusive, safe and orderly school and learning environment that has an embedded culture of child safety. Our vision is that members of the school community (teachers, parents, students, etc.) feel empowered to discuss child safety and raise any concerns about child abuse. The Principal and school leaders of FCS will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school excursions and in the use of digital technology and social media.

### **Staff Requirements**

- All staff are to undertake the On-Line Course – Mandatory Reporting. This is to be completed each year.
- All staff are to undertake the PROTECT -School staff training- Child Safe Standards. This is to be done as a refresher each year.



### Policy Endorsement

This Policy has been endorsed by the FCS Governing Body.

Date: September 2023

Review Date: September 2023

Review Cycle. Every 2 years

Exceptions: This Policy may be reviewed earlier than the date stated subject to circumstance.