



Heatherwood School No 4871

Child Safety Policy

RATIONALE

As part of Heatherwood School's commitment to child safety the following principles shall apply in developing the school culture and ethos

1. Heatherwood School is committed to child safety.
2. Heatherwood School wishes to ensure all children are safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
3. Heatherwood School is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
4. Heatherwood School has a zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.
5. Heatherwood School ensures it follows its' legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when worried about a child's safety.
6. Heatherwood school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
7. Heatherwood School ensures robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
8. Heatherwood School is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
9. Heatherwood School will support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a mild intellectual disability and/ or disability.
10. Heatherwood School has specific policies, procedures and training in place that supports our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

AIMS

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school and community. 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 in our organisation, 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 mild intellectual disability or 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 our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

IMPLEMENTATION

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone working at Heatherwood School understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Heatherwood School ensures that we train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a mild intellectual disability or/disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

Heatherwood School will take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. It will develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the policies on National Criminal Records Check and Working with Children Check and on Volunteers working within the school)

Heatherwood School ensures that recruited personnel maintain a current police check or if necessary carries out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

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.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

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.

Advice will be sought from the Conduct and Ethics Branch of the Department of Education should such allegations be made.

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.

Legislative responsibilities

Heatherwood School takes its' 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 undertaking **mandatory reporting** must comply with their duties and in line with the schools' mandatory reporting policy.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

Heatherwood School has 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), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Heatherwood School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

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 child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed¹
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour

LINKS

This document should be read in conjunction with the following policy documents

- **Code of Conduct for Staff**
 - **Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy**
 - **Student Management Policy and procedures**
 - **Bullying and Harassment Policy**
 - **On site supervision of students policy**
 - **Excursion Policy**
 - **Incursions Policy**
 - **Camps Policy**
 - **Yard Duty Policy**
 - **School Bus Policy**
 - **Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures**
 - **Mobile Phone Policy**
 - **Safety Camera Policy**
 - **Sun Smart policy**
 - **Equal Opportunity Policy**
 - **Duty of care Policy**
 - **First Aid policy**
 - **Student Health (First Aid) Policy**
 - **Administration of Medication Policy**
 - **NCHRC and WWC Policy**
 - **Anaphylaxis Policy**
 - **Asthma Policy**
 - **Attendance Policy**
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- **Communication Procedures and Schedule**
- **Enrolment Policy Specialist School**
- **Privacy Policy**
- **Confidentiality Policy**
- **Rising Concerns & Complaints Policy**
- **Accidents & Incidents Reporting Policy**

DESIGNATED CHILD SAFETY OFFICER/S

There are three designated child safety officer/s at Heatherwood School.

These three people assume this role as part of their overall welfare role and are members of Principal Class.

These officers are:

- **Paul Hills (Principal)**
- **Braham Morris (Assistant Principal -Student Wellbeing)**
- **Lesley Foster (Assistant Principal)**

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This Policy was last ratified by School Council in 2016