



CHILD SAFE POLICY

BLACKBURN LAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Florence Street Blackburn 3130

RATIONALE

Blackburn Lake Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. Blackburn Lake Primary School has a commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse. We support and respect all children as well as our staff and volunteers. Blackburn Lake Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people feel safe, and their voices are heard when decisions are made that affect their lives. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We want all children at this school to be safe, happy and empowered. Every person involved in our school has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. We have legal and moral obligations, which we follow rigorously, to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.

AIMS

This policy aims:

- To ensure all children feel safe and supported at school
- To prevent child abuse by identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks
- To ensure that processes and procedures are in place to protect children from child abuse
- To value and empower children in decision making processes
- To ensure that all staff as well as contractors, volunteers, visitors to the school and parents/carers understand the school's child safety guidelines and how to behave appropriately with and towards children
- To comply with Ministerial Order No. 870 and the Child Safety Standards
- To comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law.

DEFINITIONS

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
- a grooming offence; or
- the infliction of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect on a child.

School staff includes individuals working in a school environment who are:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)
- in the government teaching service; or
- employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act; or
- volunteers or contracted service providers.

Child-connected work includes all work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

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

- 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 and other events).

GUIDELINES

Blackburn Lake Primary School is committed to child safety. In its planning, decision-making and operations our school will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Blackburn Lake Primary School's Leadership team will rigorously monitor the school's adherence to this Child Safe Policy

- All staff (including contractors and volunteers) must agree to abide by the school's Child Safe Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.
- Our School is committed to supporting and enabling our staff and volunteers through provision of regular training and education on child abuse risks.
- We have procedures in place to enable all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.
- The Assistant Principal will assume the role of Child Safety Officer, acting as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
- Blackburn Lake Primary School will communicate our child safety policies and procedures to our community via our school website.

Our Students:

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active members of the Blackburn Lake Primary School community. We will involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We will listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We will promote diversity and tolerance at this school and promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We will promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and Torres Strait islanders. We will promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. We will work to ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Blackburn Lake Primary School staff will endeavour to deliver appropriate education about child abuse awareness and prevention to the students. They will also endeavour to promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly for children.

Recruitment:

We take reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. When recruiting staff and volunteers we are aware that we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

Refer Blackburn Lake Primary School's Recruitment Guidelines

Staff and Volunteers:

This policy as well as our Child Safe Code of Conduct guides the school's staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school. All staff and volunteers must agree to the Child Safe Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and Supervision:

At Blackburn Lake Primary School we believe that professional development, training and education is important to ensure that our staff understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school 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. We are committed to ensuring our staff and volunteers are adequately skilled to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

The leadership team of Blackburn Lake Primary School 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 disability.

New staff and volunteers will be supervised regularly by the Child Safety Officer 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 as outlined in our school code of conduct. 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.

Fair Procedures for All Staff

At Blackburn Lake Primary School the safety and wellbeing of our students is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to our staff and volunteers. 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) and all such 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.

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 Guidelines

At Blackburn Lake Primary School we take our 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 who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties. Refer *Blackburn Lake Primary School's Child Protection- Reporting Obligation Guidelines*

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, at Blackburn Lake Primary School we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

Allegations Concerns and Complaints

Blackburn Lake Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has identified practices and processes in place to investigate such allegations thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all students, 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).

BLACKBURN LAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL'S RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Blackburn Lake Primary School - Child Safe Environment Policy

Blackburn Lake Primary School – Child Protection-Reporting Obligations Guidelines

Blackburn Lake Primary School - School Risk Assessment Template

Blackburn Lake Primary School – Human Resources Practices

Blackburn Lake Primary School – Code of Conduct

Blackburn Lake Primary School – Statement of Commitment

Blackburn Lake Primary School – Recruitment Guidelines

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed in line with our policy review cycle.