

Child Safe Standards

Children have the right to be safe and protected at all times including of course their time spent at school.

It is vital that parents feel confident that their child is safe and well in the care that is provided by their school. Schools are responsible for working to ensure everything possible is done to keep children safe whilst at school. This includes their time spent in all school related or other activities or programs. Examples would include Out of Hours School Care and offsite school council approved sports, excursions or camps.



Principals and teachers are held to a high standard of care in relation to students. This duty which is by law non delegable requires them to take all reasonable steps to reduce risk including –

- provision of suitable and safe premises
- provision of an adequate system of supervision
- implementation of strategies to prevent bullying
- ensuring that medical assistance is provided to a sick or injured student
- managing employee recruitment, conduct and performance

In addition, whenever a teacher-student relationship exists, teachers have a special **duty of care**. This is expressed in the legal sense as "*a teacher is to take such measures as are reasonable in the circumstances to protect a student under the teacher's charge from risk of injury that the teacher should reasonably have foreseen.*"

Now in 2016, a specific Ministerial Order (No. 870) "Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools" must be complied with. This order is a key part of Government response to the recommendations of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the **Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Non-Government Organisation – The Inquiry Betray of Trust report**

made a number of recommendations aimed at protecting children from all forms of abuse and neglect. In particular, Recommendation 12.1 of the report recommended that the government implement minimum standards for maintaining "child safe environments" in organisation that work with children.

As a result new minimum standards have been released and these standards will be **implemented and enforced** in Victorian schools through the **School Registration Framework**.

There were already a significant number of requirements that all schools have to comply with and be able to evidence to maintain their registration. These are all reviewed via the government School Improvement and Review cycle. The requirements stipulated within Ministerial Order 870 are now an additional requirement for registration.

The order spells out what the **Child Safe Standards** mean in a school environment and clearly demonstrate the Government's "zero tolerance" for child abuse in Victorian schools. As the regulator for all Victorian schools the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) will play a key role in monitoring and enforcing compliance with the new standards.

School governing authorities at all schools, at Bundoora Primary School that is our school council, must ensure the minimum standards are being complied with. As part of this there is the important requirement that schools inform their community about their arrangements to meet certain standards.

In addressing this and ensuring all Bundoora Primary School parents are informed, ongoing information and updates will be provided by leadership and school council. Throughout term 4 2016 and, into 2017 this will be via newsletters and the school website and will outline details of action being taken.

In addition policy, procedures and codes required will be added to documentation provided to parent volunteers, staff, visitors and contractors. These materials will also be used in training and induction and to develop student awareness of how to take action and/or speak up.

Please see **Child Safe Standards Information Sheet Number 1** included with this newsletter.

Information Sheet Number 1 - September, 2016

CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS

What are the standards?

The child safe standards require schools to consider all aspects of child safety and put measures in place to protect children from all forms of abuse, including:

- sexual or grooming offences
- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect

There are seven child safe standards

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety
2. A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety
3. A child safety code of conduct
4. School staff selection, supervision and management practices for a child-safe environment
5. Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation

Key messages

- everyone connected to our school can help children be safe
- we (leadership and school governance), have zero tolerance for any abuse of children
- we (leadership and school governance), already have policies and processes in place to protect the care, safety and welfare of children, these are being strengthened to ensure a zero tolerance approach to child abuse and will be included on the school website
- there are clear boundaries about how adults in our school community may interact with Kingsville students here
- we (leadership and school governance), acknowledge that the new child safe standards go further than child protection arrangements did in the past
- the child safe standards apply to school staff (including volunteers and contractors), visitors and students' family members
- keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility, different people at our school have different roles and responsibilities for ensuring children's safety