

Lalor North Primary School Statement of Commitment to Child Safety Child Safe Policy

Purpose

Lalor North Primary has an important responsibility for keeping children safe and is committed to meeting the Child Safety Standards as defined in *Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools*. This policy communicates to the Lalor North Primary community how this will be will actioned at our school.

Scope and Audience

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working at Lalor North Primary School, and will be available to all community members.

Our Commitment to Child Safety, and Principles

Lalor North 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.

Lalor North Primary has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Lalor North Primary is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe, and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability. Every person involved in Lalor North Primary has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role s/he 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.

In its planning, decision making and operations, Lalor North Primary will

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
- Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or feeling unsafe and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues

- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
- Value the input of, and communicate regularly with, families and carers

Child Safe Culture

i) Our Children

This policy is intended to empower children in our school. 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 a disability are safe and can participate equally.

ii) Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy and associated code guide our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children at Lalor North Primary School. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

The Child Safety Officer is the designated person to be informed about all allegations or concerns, and to provide support to other personnel. The Child Safety Officer will ensure that child safety is prioritised, and that any allegations of abuse or safety concerns are recorded and responded to consistently and in line with the Department of Education and Training's (DET) legal requirements, policies and procedures.

Human Resource Practices

i) Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our aim is that all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect all children from abuse, 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 employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school'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 appropriate (please refer to Lalor North Primary School's Child Safety Code of Conduct). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Education and Training, Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

ii) Recruitment

We take all 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. Lalor North Primary School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check, or to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teachers and to provide evidence of this. We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

iii) 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, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Legislative Responsibilities

Lalor North Primary School takes 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.
- Teachers, who are **mandatory reporters**, must comply with their duties, as per the Child Protection Reporting Policy.
- All staff are expected to report child abuse in line with the Child Protection Reporting Policy.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Lalor North Primary takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff is trained to deal appropriately with allegations by informing the Child Safety Officer immediately and following the processes in the Lalor North Primary School 'Child Protection Reporting Policy and Procedures'.

All adults working within the school have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

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 observed

- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Risk Reduction and Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, 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 (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child at the school on social media).

Confidentiality and 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 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.

Communication of this Policy

This policy will be communicated to the school community.

- Publishing on the school website
- Referring to it in the school newsletter
- Referencing the policy in recruitment advertisements
- Ensuring that the policy forms part of School Council, staff, contractor and volunteer inductions
- Including it in School Council member and staff training/awareness sessions

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse includes

- any act committed against a child involving—
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of—
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

Related Policies and Documents

- School Policy and Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx>
- School Policy and Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx>
- Lalor North Primary School Child Protection and Reporting Policy
- Lalor North Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct

Policy Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur, or when legislation changes.

Ratified by School Council on 29.08.2016