

CHILD SAFE POLICY

PURPOSE

Parkwood Green Primary School is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have **zero tolerance** for child abuse. Everyone working at Parkwood Green Primary School is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse. Ministerial Order 870 - *Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools* provides guidance on how the Standards apply to a school setting. It came into effect on 1 August 2016. The Standards apply to all organisations that provide services to children.

To implement the minimum Standards in accordance with the Order, school governing authorities must:

- take account of the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable; and
- make reasonable efforts to accommodate such diversity.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of Child safe Standards
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Parkwood Green Primary School will not be tolerated
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of unsafe behaviour, and accept responsibility to report any risky behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of child abuse and/or neglect are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by abusive behaviour (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing abusive behaviour at Parkwood Green Primary School

SCOPE

Parkwood Green Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment. This policy applies to **all members of the school community** - volunteers, contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people, and they will adhere to and work within the boundaries of this policy at Parkwood Green Primary School.

Members of the school community include:

- ❖ Teachers including CRT
- ❖ Non-Teaching Employees - Education Support Staff, SSSOs
- ❖ Volunteers
- ❖ Student Teachers
- ❖ Students
- ❖ Parents

This policy will apply across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

The Child Safe Standards (the Standards) are compulsory minimum standards for all organisations that provide services to children including Victorian schools. The aim of the Standards is to ensure organisations are well prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect. It is recognised that many schools will have existing policies and procedures that aim to keep children safe.

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The Standards provide a framework to identify gaps and improve policy and practices around child safety. On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015*, which amended the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005* to introduce the Child Safe Standards that would apply to all organisations involved in child related work in Victoria.

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) as regulator for all Victorian schools has responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Child Safe Standards in schools. The Standards are:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

To support our school to create a child safe organisation and protect students from all forms of abuse, and in accordance with the Child Safe Standards, Parkwood Green Primary School will:

- Facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Parkwood green Primary School.
- Work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
- Prevent child abuse within Parkwood Green Primary School.
- Advise all parties of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
- Provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation
- Provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
- Provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Parkwood Green Primary School will demonstrate its commitment to its **Child Safety policy** on an annual basis through sharing the policy with all staff, casual relief teachers, student support services, contractors, volunteers, school council and the school community. This will be done in order to:

- Support, encourage and enable school staff, parents and children to understand, identify and report child safety matters; and
- Support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Monitoring the Child Safe Policy will include:

- Embedding of child safe strategies in to daily school procedures
- Staff commitment to child safety demonstrated through signed document
- A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Providing clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Implementing strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- Developing strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

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POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The principal of Parkwood Green Primary School is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse
- Providing information to staff, contractors and volunteers regarding relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and Parkwood Green Primary School Code of Conduct
- Providing information to all adults within the Parkwood Green's Primary School community regarding their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with policies and procedures
- Providing information to all staff, contractors and volunteers regarding their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety)
- Providing information to staff, contractors and volunteers regarding their child protection responsibilities

Parkwood Green Primary School will provide all staff with a code of conduct, which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children. Annually the policy and code will be reviewed and each staff member will sign the code and it will be filed on the personnel file.

Disciplinary procedures should be used if an allegation of child abuse is not made or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.

A proactive performance development strategy will be used to improve employees and volunteers skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse. As part of this commitment, specific Parkwood Green Primary School Professional Development will be offered to staff at least once per year in addition to DET online requirements.

Employees and volunteers must be aware of reporting procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the organisation. Members of the school must be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions. See PGPS Internal Referral Guide (*Appendix a*), Risk identification Guide (*Appendix b*) and our Mandatory Reporting Policy, for more information specific to the school.

Children and their families should be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported – they can go to their child's Classroom Teacher, a member of the Leadership Team, Student Wellbeing staff or the School Principal.

All school leaders must ensure that they:

- Promote child safety at all times
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate/minimise any risk to the extent possible
- Educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse, and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities

Teachers should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All staff/volunteers/parents/contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Parkwood Green Primary School's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements
- Sign in at the front office, collect an identification badge and wear it at times

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- Staff will report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and/or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters
- Volunteers, parents and contractors should report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to a teacher or member of the principal class (or, if the teacher/principal class are involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation), and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety

Employment of new personnel

Persons applying for a role as a teacher with the school must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Parkwood Green Primary School may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at Parkwood Green Primary School and during their time with Parkwood Green Primary School at regular intervals. Parkwood Green Primary School will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Risk Management

Parkwood Green Primary School will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

Parkwood Green Primary School will have a school leadership team committed to identifying and managing risks at Parkwood Green Primary School. The school leadership team will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

Reporting

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection

or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise their supervisor about their concern.

In situations where a member of the principal class is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision (e.g. leading teacher).

Teachers must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Principal which must be followed through with a report to an external regulatory body such as Child Protection or the police.

Listening to Children

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/care givers. We encourage child and parent/care giver involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/care givers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Investigating

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the principal will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the principal may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees,

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contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The principal will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential, however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the principal shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

Responding

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached Parkwood Green Primary School's policies or Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of Parkwood Green Primary School's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the school. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of information about particular children and their families. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Parkwood Green Primary School will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

The collection, use and storage of information is included in school policies.

First names of children only will be published in the school newsletter. Children without consent for the publication of photographs will be kept documented on a register available to all staff and updated regularly. Upon changes in custody or living arrangements, the consent will be updated.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

DEFINITIONS

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively

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assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- a. The child is in need of protection
- b. The child has suffered or is likely to suffer “significant harm as a result of physical injury”
- c. The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child

A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a ‘reasonable belief’ might be formed if:

- a. A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- b. A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- c. Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- d. Professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused, and/or
- e. Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- The law of the Commonwealth or of the relevant state or territory
- The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct
- Parkwood Green Primary School Code of Conduct
- Termination of Employment Policy and Misconduct Procedures

Related School Policies

- Managing Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Work Place Bullying Policy
- Digital Technologies Acceptable use Policy
- Camps and Excursions Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Anti -Bullying Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Working with Children Policy
- Privacy Policy

DET RESOURCES

- [Child Protection - Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Documents/protectionofchildren.PDF>
- Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations - elearning module
- <http://www.elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/>
- State of Victoria (2010) Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people: A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children’s Services and Victorian Schools

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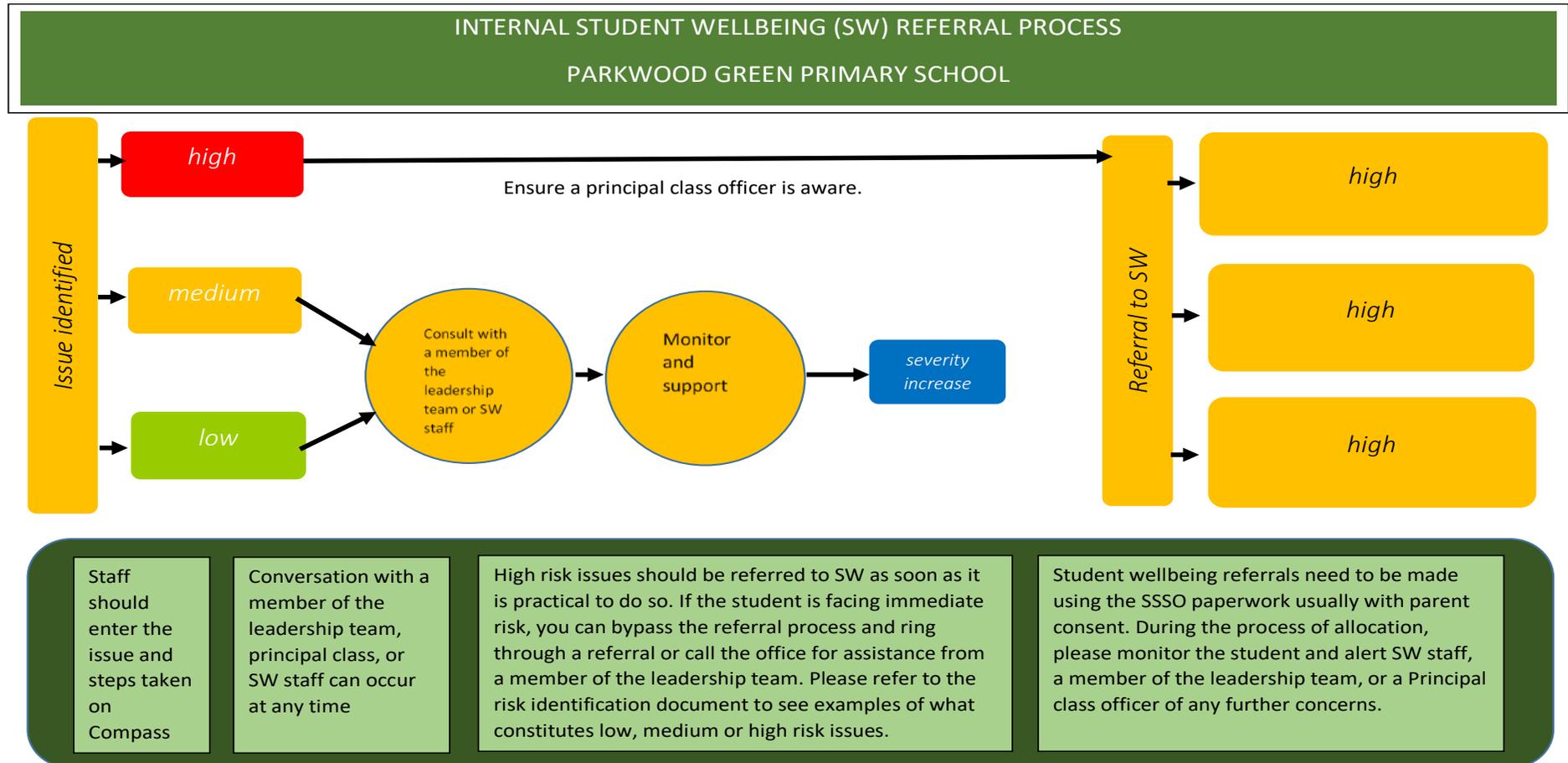
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EVALUATION

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework, annually as part of School Council responsibilities, and/or in response to any reportable incident, following analysis of school data on reported incidents, as part of the school's review cycle and/or if circumstances and regulations change.

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APPENDIX A



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APPENDIX B

HIGH RISK ISSUE

- *Safety, (abuse, assault, self-harm, suicidal ideation, concern for student, another is at risk from student.*
- *Risky behaviour (criminal activity, harmful activity)*
- *Out of home / homeless*
- *Mental health / mental health of parent / guardian*
- *substance use by parent / guardian*
- *extreme behavioural problems (ADHD, ODD, high number of suspensions)*

MEDIUM RISK ISSUE

- *ongoing bullying / harassment*
- *peer/parent/teacher conflict / breakdown of relationship*
- *ongoing emotional regulation issues (anger)*
- *grief / bereavement*
- *eating issues*
- *school refusal / anxiety based*

LOW RISK ISSUE

- *physicality in classroom / yard*
- *bullying / harassment*
- *friendship / relationship issues*
- *learning difficulties*
- *work cards /progress reports*
- *family issues / difficulties*
- *building resilience*
- *behavioural problems (positive behavioural support program implement action)*
- *poor social skills*

Please note that this is a guide only and issues can escalate based on the situation and the individual child.

Use your best judgement to refer and seek support.