



# CHILD SAFE POLICY

## 1. RATIONALE

Regency Park Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This is the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Regency Park Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse. This policy will apply to all members of the Regency Park Primary School community and be inclusive of all school related activities, processes and procedures.

Regency Park Primary School 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 Regency Park Primary 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.

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); and
- the infliction on a child of physical violence; or serious emotional or psychological harm; and serious neglect of a child.

## 2. AIMS

To embed a culture of child safety within the school community where all student needs are met.

To raise awareness within the school community of the importance of child safety.

To raise awareness of the needs of all children.

To increase awareness of the need for sensitive and diverse approaches to child safety issues due to Indigenous, cultural or linguistic background or disability.

To define the roles and responsibilities of the school and staff in protecting the safety and wellbeing of students.

To ensure that all staff are aware of the mandated processes for reporting child abuse.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION

Regency Park PS supports all students through a preventative and intervention approach. Teachers deliver classroom social skills, wellbeing programs and activities at each level which build positive relationships, self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness skills. Teachers provide curriculum and programs valuing difference and focus on student safety. In all classrooms, we actively promote an environment which is safe, supportive and inclusive. Our Kidsmatter framework encompasses the following programs which support child safety and positive relationships: "Start Right at Regency", Play is the Way, Circle Time, Life Education, Family Life, Buddy Program, Peer Mediation Program, Peer support program and Kool Kids. Teachers and students design their own class expectations, in line with our school values and regularly discuss and review class, yard and school rules and expectations, student rights and responsibilities.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Regency Park Primary School will:

- appoint the Assistant Principal as the primary Child Safety Officer and ensure that the role statement for this position clearly outlines the requirements for undertaking this responsibility
- ensure all of the staff and volunteers agree to abide by the Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children
- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
- foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children

- provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children through the school's Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- include the Child Safe Policy in the school induction manual and processes;
- 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
- 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
- collect, use and disclose information about particular children and their families according to Victorian Privacy Laws;
- facilitate opportunities for discussion in a range of forums across the school community including at Staff meetings, Leadership Team meetings, School Council and Parent Forums.

### **Child Safety**

Our organisation is committed to child safety. At Regency Park:

- we want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- we have zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.
- we have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks as much as possible.
- our organisation has human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- our organisation is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- we are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal 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 have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

### **Our children**

At Regency park we:

- empower students to become active participants in our organisation
- involve students when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.
- value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives through the Student Representative Council, Start Right at Regency program and Play Is The Way.
- promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation where people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

### **Our staff and volunteers**

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.

### **Training and supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation 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
- to be trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse

New employees and volunteers will be inducted 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. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels by the Principal or Assistant Principal, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

### **Recruitment**

We 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.

Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability are welcome to apply for positions at our school.

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.

### **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 on a set proforma. All records are securely stored.

### **Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or students, 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**

Our organisation 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.

All staff at Regency Park Primary School must complete annual Mandatory Reporting training. These are completed at the beginning of every school year through the **Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations eLearning Module**. This ensures all staff are aware of their responsibilities, as all staff who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

## **Risk 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, including school camps and excursions, and online environments. Staff is strongly encouraged NOT to have contact with students on social media.

## **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

Our organisation 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 and:

- will work to ensure they know what to do, along with students and families, and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour
- will all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place
- will work along with students and families to ensure all know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour
- if an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. All allegations will be referred to the Principal or Assistant Principal to report to the authorities.

## **4. OTHER POLICIES AND LEGISLATION**

This Safe Child Policy is supported by the following policies:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Camping Program Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Duty of Care Policy
- Incursion, Excursion, Camps and Cultural Program Policy
- ISSE Policy
- Child Protection Reporting Policy
- Student Engagement, Inclusion and Wellbeing Policy

### **Related Legislation:**

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Crimes Act 1958
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001
- Ministerial Order No. 870
- <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/default.html>
- Department Resources:
  - A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST (PDF - 270Kb)
  - Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
  - Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations

## **5. REGULAR REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur.

This was ratified by the School Council in 2016.