

STUDENT HEALTH, SAFETY, WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT

Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Policy

PURPOSE

Springvale Rise Primary School has **zero tolerance of child abuse** and is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. A child safe environment is a place where children and young people feel safe, happy, and free to learn; and their voices are heard when decisions are made that affect their lives. We are committed to the cultural safety of all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

This policy provides the framework for our school's approach to upholding the Child Safe Standards and outlines our commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation, where children and young people feel and are safe. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of the Springvale Rise Primary School community understand the various moral responsibilities, as well as legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety. This includes understanding 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. The specific procedures that are applicable at our school are contained in Appendix A.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers, and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities, and services.

POLICY

All children and young people have the right to protection and to have adults acting in their best interests. At Springvale Rise Primary School we also recognise the diversity of the children and young people at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety. We understand the important role our school plays in protecting children from all types of abuse, including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation)
- Grooming
 - Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic). This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.
- Family violence
 - Family violence includes any behaviour by a family member that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of family violence, including violence between adults and/or adolescents in the home.
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect (including medical neglect)

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School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and expected behaviour in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Springvale Rise Primary School aims to create a culture where staff, students, parents, and the school community are encouraged to raise, discuss, and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Staff and volunteers are trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. Staff and volunteers are supported through ongoing supervision and professional development to protect children from abuse, promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, as well as protect the safety of children who are vulnerable or who have a disability. All Child Safety documents are readily available online and in hard copy for all staff and students to read at any time.

Risk Reduction and Management

Springvale Rise Primary School ensures risk management processes are used to support the school's commitment to child safety. The SRPS Risk Assessment Register is used to assess, identify, and document the school's risks in relation to child safety, and plan and document risk management strategies where necessary. The schools will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment. Specific strategies are outlined in Appendix 1.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Springvale Rise Primary school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law and other relevant laws. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the Department of Education and Training's Schools' Privacy Policy.

Responding to Child Safety Concerns

The school has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff (including school council employees) must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. The specific steps that staff at Springvale Rise Primary School must take when responding to a child safety concern, can be found in Appendix A: Child Safe Standard 5, and in Resource 4: Procedure to Respond to a Child Safety Concern.

Mandatory Reporting

The staff at Springvale Rise Primary School are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations. The following individuals are mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic):

- Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers, including principals
- school staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT
- registered medical practitioners and nurses
- registered psychologists
- all members of the police force
- people in religious ministry
- staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing, including (but not limited to) school health and wellbeing staff, primary welfare coordinators, student wellbeing coordinators, mental health practitioners, chaplains, and Student Support Services staff.

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DFFH) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

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- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse, and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Springvale Rise Primary School to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the principal does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module* annually. Other members of staff working at our school are strongly encouraged to undertake the online learning. This includes, for example, Education Support staff, out of school-hours care staff and casual relief teachers.

Child in Need of Protection

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. The policy of the Department of Education and Training (DET) requires **all staff** who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to report their concerns to DFFH or Victoria Police, and discuss their concerns with the school Wellbeing and/or Leadership team. At Springvale Rise Primary School we also encourage all staff to speak with their Wellbeing Leader if they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing and believe the family would benefit from the support of ChildFIRST.

Reportable Conduct

The principal must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (9637 2594) if the school becomes aware of an allegation (reasonable belief) of 'reportable conduct' involving current or former teachers, contractors, volunteers (including parents), allied health staff and school council employees. If school staff become aware of reportable conduct by any person in the above positions, they should notify the school principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the principal, they should notify the Regional Director. Reportable conduct includes:

- a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour causing significant emotional or physical harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child
- misconduct involving any of the above.

The Department, through the Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

Failure to Disclose Offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 years or over.

'Reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. A 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

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Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000 or local police station) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so. 'Reasonable excuse' is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed, e.g. through a mandatory report to DFFH Child Protection.

Failure to Protect Offence

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include removing the adult (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police. If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Springvale Rise Primary School documentation
 - Child Safe Code of Conduct
 - Volunteers and Visitors policy
 - Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Department of Education and Training *Policy and Advisory Library*:
 - [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#)
 - [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.](#)
 - [Reportable Conduct](#)
 - [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools.](#)

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in May 2021 and is scheduled for review prior to the next school review, or if guidelines change.

Principals must approve and present the policy and procedures to school council for noting.

This policy was presented to School Council in: May, 2021.

Signed by Principal: Debbie Cottier.

APPENDIX A

Child Safe Standards and Child Safety Reporting Procedures at Springvale Rise Primary School

CHILD SAFE PRINCIPLE OF INCLUSION

At Springvale Rise Primary School our students, staff, parents and guardians, volunteers and community members work co-operatively to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children in our education and care, and to implement the seven child safe standards at all times. School Leadership takes account of diversity when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards. We demonstrate our commitment to providing a safe school environment for all students by:

- Writing, reviewing and sharing school policies that reflect the diversity of our school
- Using staff briefings, forums and communication channels to ensure staff are following policies and procedures
- Celebrating, promoting, and educating the school community on significant cultural events including:
 - Cultural Diversity Week
 - NAIDOC Week
 - Harmony Week
 - Refugee Week
- Offering Community Hubs Programs such as Vietnamese and English playgroup and English language class
- Providing cultural exploration within the classroom through the Multicultural Kitchen Garden program
- Organising incursions and family information sessions related to safe use of technology, health and wellbeing
- Flying the Australian, Aboriginal, and Torres Straight Island flag in the school and giving an Acknowledgement of Country at Assembly and Special Events
- Providing professional development to staff that builds their capacity to support diverse families, including:
 - Trauma Informed Practices
 - ABLES training
 - Restorative Practices
 - Behaviour Support training
 - Refugees in schools
- Ensuring classrooms are culturally inclusive through the artwork, literature and displays

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 1: Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety

At Springvale Rise Primary School we have strong governance arrangements in place through specific policies, procedures and training, to support all stakeholders in their responsibilities and commitment to child safety, such as:

- Child safety information is a standing agenda item at staff briefings, staff forums, team meetings and school council meetings
- Child safety is discussed in class through Circle Time and Social and Emotional Learning lessons, assemblies and in the school newsletter
- Students are given a voice and opportunity to give feedback and share ideas about child safety during class time and through the SRC team
- The school's Wellbeing Team, together with the Principal and Leadership Team monitor child safe practices and provide support and guidance to all school students, staff and community members
- The wellbeing committee, run by the Wellbeing Leaders, facilitate and support the implementation of whole school practices relating to child safety and social emotional learning
- Child safe information displayed around the school and is provided to the school community via the newsletter and compass, social media and parent teacher interviews:
- Further policies that support child safety, including:
 - Inclusion and Diversity Policy
 - Visitors and Volunteers Policy
 - Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
 - Yard Duty and Supervision Policy
 - Duty of Care Policy
 - Camps and Excursions Policy

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2: A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety

The contents of this document, together with related resources have been made publicly available, including on the school website and school system Compass, to ensure that the whole school community understands Springvale Rise Primary School's commitment to protect and keep all children safe.

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 3: A child safety code of conduct

All of Springvale Rise Primary School's staff, volunteers and visitors must agree to abide by the **SRPS Child Safety Code of Conduct** (Resource 1) and comply with this Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Policy and related policies.

The SRPS Child Safety Code of Conduct clearly sets out the acceptable and unacceptable adult/child relationships and behaviours. All school staff are required to read and sign their acknowledgement and commitment to the code annually. Visitors and volunteers are directed to view the code during mandatory induction process. The code is made publicly available on the school's website and Compass, and is displayed within the school grounds.

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse.

In **recruiting new staff and volunteers** school leaders will:

- ensure that position descriptions for all new positions the standard 'Child Safe Environments' clause as provided in the 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide
- develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate Springvale Rise Primary School's commitment to child safety and an awareness of ethical and legislative obligations
- request two forms of personal identification and evidence of a current Working with Children Check for all people engaged in child-related work
- carry out thorough reference and police checks during the recruitment process of staff and volunteers
- conduct interviews that give insight into an applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries.

In **training and supervising staff and volunteers** school leaders will:

- train staff in the school's child safety strategies including identifying, assessing and minimising risks of child abuse
- supervise new staff and volunteers to ensure they understand the school's commitment to child safety and the role they play in protecting children from abuse such as reporting through appropriate channels any inappropriate behaviour
- work with the Wellbeing Team to monitor and review the effectiveness of the child safety strategies and update the processes and policies as necessary

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Our school will follow the **Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse (Four Critical Actions)** (Resource 2) when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid and call 000.

All staff at our school who have formed a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection, are directed to follow the documents below:

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- Springvale Rise *Responding to Child Safety Concerns* (Resource 3)
- Springvale Rise *Procedure to Respond to Child Safety Concerns Flowchart* (Resource 4)

Further information can be found via the DET Protect website

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx>

Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection, even if it is against the recommendation of the wellbeing or principal team.

It is the role of the Wellbeing Leader on each campus (Child Safety Officer) together with the Principal team to:

- familiarise all staff and school community with the Springvale Rise Primary School **Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Policy** and **Procedure to Respond to Child Safety Concerns** (listed above)
- ensure that all staff complete Department's Mandatory Reporting online Professional Development module annually and remain informed of their reporting obligations throughout the year
- ensure all staff are adhering to the schools policies and procedures, confidentiality and record keeping expectations
- provide support to staff throughout the process of responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- document and securely store child safe records

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risk of child abuse

Springvale Rise Primary School employs a range of strategies to minimise the risk of child abuse and maintain a child safe environment. These strategies include:

- The Wellbeing Leader's (Child Safety Officers) complete a **Child Safe Risk Assessment** annually and share finding with staff
- The Risk Assessment will be reviewed in the event of an incident or breach of the Child Safety Standards and update staff accordingly
- The Wellbeing Leaders (Child Safety Officer), together with the Principal Team, will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the risk controls
- The Principal will ensure all new staff are informed of their obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse and provide opportunities for all staff to complete specific training, including mandatory reporting and identifying and responding to child abuse
- A collection of school polices support our Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Policy, including:
 - Digital Technologies Policy
 - Photographing, Filming and Recording Policy
 - Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - Inclusion and Diversity Policy
 - Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
 - Duty of Care Policy
 - Visitors and Volunteers Policy
 - Yard Duty and Supervision Policy
 - Camps and Excursions Policy
- Child Safe is an agenda item on all School Council, Leadership and team meetings as well as staff briefings
- Child Safe is included on all risk assessments for camps, incursions, and excursions.

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 7: Strategies to promote students' participation and empowerment

Springvale Rise Primary school's curriculum framework ensures that Social and Emotional Learning opportunities are delivered as a part of the weekly teaching and learning program in every classroom. Programs and resources have been implemented school wide to support both students and their teachers to have a collective understanding and language when discussing respectful relationships and social and emotional wellbeing, for example:

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- Daily Circle Time to promote relationship building
- Restorative Practice approach to behaviour management
- Zones of Regulation program used in all classrooms
- Respectful Relationships curriculum resource used in classrooms
- Promoting our core School Values: Respect, Collaboration, Resilience, Excellence
- Monash Health CASEA team available to build the capacity of staff

Through this, students learn:

- what it feels like to be safe and unsafe
- how to identify their trusted adults and people they can go to for help
- ways to recognise how emotions feel in their body and the vocabulary to describe their feelings
- how to identify and communicate when they don't feel safe in physical and online environments
- how to make decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them
- how to share their views and communicate with others in respectful ways
- what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), rights and responsibilities and resilience
- what the Springvale Rise school values are and how each one can be put into practice in our daily lives.

The Wellbeing Team will support staff to confidently implement the programs and strategies listed above. They are responsible for both whole school and individual support throughout the year, including professional development opportunities externally, and internally during staff forums, curriculum days and PLT meetings. In addition, they will promote the Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Policy and supporting documents in a way that is readily accessible, easy to understand, user-friendly and culturally appropriate for all.

The Wellbeing Team will ensure the needs of all students, particularly children who are vulnerable due to family circumstances, abilities or indigenous, cultural or linguistic backgrounds are met through Wellbeing meetings, Student Support Group meetings, Individual Education Plans and/or staged responses.

RESOURCE 1: Child Safety Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, visitors and members of the School Council of Springvale Rise PS are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of Springvale Rise PS are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to Springvale Rise PS child safe policy at all times / upholding Springvale Rise PS statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to Springvale Rise PS Child Safety Officer – Mary Sampieri or Jodie Pyman/Carly Jamar/ leadership, and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to Springvale Rise PS Child Safety Officer – Mary Sampieri or Jodie Pyman/ Carly Jamar/ leadership
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometimes, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including / because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without our child safety officer's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate)
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

RESOURCE 3: Responding to a Child Safety Concern

What to do in the moment...

Determine if it is the Appropriate Time or Place

- Use **protective interrupting** if other students are present. *“That sounds really interesting, I think we should keep talking about it after this.”*
- Take steps to move to a private space as soon as possible (snack/lunch or call for support).

Confidentiality Statement

- Use a **confidentiality statement**: *“I need some help to support you as I am not going to be able to keep what you have told me between just you and me. I will need to tell XXXXX to work out what we need to do next to support you.”*

Document Everything

- Record notes about the disclosure - during or immediately afterwards. *When it happened. Where it happened and the exact words of the child*
- Remember to remain objective and factual not emotive and opinionated

Do’s and Don’ts

- Do be conscious of your body language and facial expression. Remain calm and do not display panic or shock. Use a neutral tone without urgency.
- Do listen, and allow the student to talk without interrupting them. Do not ask questions that are investigative or potentially invasive such as *“What did you do?”* instead gently ask *“What happened next?”* or use verbal facilitators like *“I see”*
- Do avoid making any comments that would lead the student to believe what has happened is their fault, for example *“Why didn’t you get help?”*
- Do not make promises to the child about what might occur next, such as *“That won’t happen again”*
- Do reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important, for example *“Thank you for telling me. This is important. You’re really brave and we want to keep you safe.”*

Do not down play the significance of the disclosure, report it anyway, even if it is a repeated incident.

What to do next...

1. Immediately consult the Wellbeing Leader or in their absence the Assistance Principal (prior to school ending) to determine the next steps.
2. If required, make DFFH Child Protection report together with the Wellbeing Leader. Wellbeing Leader will document this as a Level 3 Chronicle entry on COMPASS.
3. Ensure that SSS staff are involved and a critical IRIS alert is made if deemed necessary.
4. Ensure that any notes about the incident are documented / copied in the welfare file.
5. Maintain confidentiality. Do not share information about this disclosure with any staff members other than your SSTL, Wellbeing Leader Principal Team.
6. Do not discuss disclose information to the family unless cleared by DFFH Child Protection.

After that...

- You will have the opportunity to debrief with the Principal, Wellbeing Leader, SSSO, or CASEA Team.
- You will meet with the Wellbeing Leader (and/or others) to plan for ongoing support (e.g. classroom strategies, wellbeing check-ins, referrals).
- The Wellbeing Leader (and/or others) will consider if external family or individual support is appropriate. This may include ongoing involvement with DHFH Child Protection or a ChildFIRST referral.
- You will be asked to continually monitor the child, keep details notes and report any new concerns to the Wellbeing Leader.

RESOURCE 4: Procedure to Respond to Child Safety Concerns Flowchart

