



Child Safe Policy

Rationale:

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:

the principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and

the actions the school proposes to take to:

- i. demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy;
- ii. support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and
- iii. support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety:

Echuca West 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.

Echuca West Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Echuca West 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 Echuca West 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.

** Please refer to our full Statement of Commitment document which outlines our principles for Child Safety*

Child Safe Code of Conduct:

Echuca West Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

To this end, we have developed a Code of Conduct that aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation,

Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

** Please refer to our full Child Safe Code of Conduct document which outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours for all staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community.*

Our children

The children at Echuca West Primary School are empowered, vital and active participants. 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 and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Indigenous 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.

** Please refer to our Student Engagement & Well-Being Policy for more information.*

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff, parent helpers and volunteers on how to behave with children.

All of our staff, parent helpers and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff, students and the wider members of the school community 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 Echuca West Primary School understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our culture aims for all staff, students and wider members of our community to 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 support our staff through ongoing Professional Development to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and 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.

We ensure all staff and volunteers understand Echuca West Primary 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 safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with our children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Echuca West Primary School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community engaged by Echuca West Primary School are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

** Please refer to our Working with Children Check Policy for more information.*

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 using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

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

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 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

Echuca West 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 Echuca West Primary School 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.
- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

** Please refer to our Mandatory Reporting Policy for more information.*

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). 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 (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Echuca West Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

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

Echuca West Primary School staff have a duty of care to protect and preserve the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care and staff must always act in the best interests of those children and young people. If a staff member has any concerns regarding the health, safety or wellbeing of a child it is important to take immediate action.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.