



BITTERN PRIMARY SCHOOL'S CHILD SAFE POLICY

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce child safe standards into law.

The standards commenced on 1st January 2016 for most organisations working with children, with the aim of promoting cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect.

The Child Safe Standards are part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. The Betrayal of Trust Report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and in the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The child safe policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for Bittern Primary School's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

At Bittern Primary School we aim;

- To promote zero tolerance for child abuse.
- To actively listen and empower children.
- To ensure systems are in place to protect children from abuse, take all allegations seriously and respond consistently in line with the organisation's policy and procedures.
- To commit to promoting cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and provide a safe environment for vulnerable children with a disability.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Bittern PS is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

We have a zero tolerance for child abuse.

Bittern PS 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 and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children who are vulnerable and those with a disability.

Every person involved within the Bittern PS community 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.

DEFINITIONS:

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse

- 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, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school.
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems).
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff

School staff being: an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority.
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

POLICY SCOPE/COVERAGE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, students, contractors; whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

The policy applies across a range of school forums (eg. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (implementation, guidelines and procedures):

Bittern Primary School is committed to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse and responding adequately to incidents or allegations of children abuse in all physical and virtual environments made accessible to children; during or outside of school hours.

The responsibility of leading child safety at Bittern Primary School lies with the Principal, who will be supported by the School Wellbeing Coordinator, School Child Safety Officer, School Council and all Bittern Primary School staff.

Bittern Primary School will have number of policies that will contribute to the development of a culture of child safety including:

- Bittern Primary School Volunteers
- Bittern Primary School Visitors, Volunteers and Employees Policy
- Bittern Primary School Responding and Reporting Policy and Procedures
- Bittern Primary School Camp, Excursion and Incursion Policy
- Bittern Primary School Cyber Safety Policy
- Bittern Primary School Engagement & Wellbeing Policy
- Bittern Primary School Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Bittern Primary School Risk Assessment Policy

Bittern Primary School will have a number of procedures and practices that will contribute to the development of a culture of child safety including:

- Staff Code of Conduct (in relation to expectations of behaviour with children)
- Working with Children Checks (or equivalent)
- Staff Induction
- Mandatory Reporting
- Camp Planning Documentation
- Excursion, Incursion & Events Planning Documentation

Bittern Primary School's child safety strategies, procedures and practices will be inclusive of the needs of all children in accordance with the Department of Education's Equal Opportunity Policy, and in particular students who are vulnerable to abuse due to age, family circumstances, disabilities and Indigenous, cultural or linguistic background.

Legislative Responsibilities

This policy applies to allegations of disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, school staff, visitors or other persons connected to the school environment.

Our school takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- All Victorian Teachers have a legal responsibility to report incidents where children's safety is at risk. Victorian Government School employees are expected to follow the DET Mandatory Reporting policy which can be found at

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotectobligation.aspx>

- **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 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.

Further information on Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect can be found within the Bittern Primary School Responding and Reporting Policy and Procedures. Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Child Safety Code of Conduct (Standard 3)

Bittern Primary School staff will review the CoC at the commencement of each school year.

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff, volunteers, contractors (employed or engaged), and external program providers will comply with the school's Code of Conduct. BPS's Code of Conduct sets our clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Refer to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics. All new staff, volunteers, contractors, and external program providers are required to sign the code of conduct within 7 days of starting and existing staff are required to sign annually. The Principal will monitor and keep records of this. The Code of Conduct will be stored in the staff handbook, and a copy will be uploaded to the Bittern Primary School website.

A risk management strategy for BPS will be to also share the CoC with external agencies off-site, such as swimming pools, or camp sites.

School Staff Selection, Supervision and Management Practices for a Child-Safe Environment (Standard 4)

Bittern Primary School applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records checks and maintain a valued Working with Children Check.

In the implementation of this standard, Bittern Primary School will ensure that:

- a form of proof of identity and qualifications of staff is recorded with the school.
- suitability for child connected work assessed and referenced as part of the recruitment process. This assessment will be through facilities such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching and/or Working with Children Checks.
- history of previous work involving children is recorded with the school.
- a reference statement to the staff code of conduct in relation to child safety is clearly stated in job descriptions.
- a child safety induction in relation to child abuse is completed in all staffs initial and annual induction sessions.
- annual professional learning in child safety in relation to child abuse including mandatory reporting is completed accordingly.
- new staff will be provided with supervision or support arrangements in relation to assessing their suitability for child connected work.

Further information on Bittern Primary School's recruitment and engagement procedures can be found in the school's Visitors, Volunteers and Employee's Policy (school website).

Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Suspected Child Abuse (Standard 5)

- Bittern Primary 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. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.
- The school's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found in the Bittern Primary School Responding and Reporting Policy and Procedures (website). A student linked to an allegation or disclosure will be referred to the Student Support Services or an external service as appropriate and a Student Support Group will be convened.

Identifying and Reducing/Removing Risks of Child Abuse (Standard 6)

Bittern Primary School will have a procedure for all child connected work in all environments that evaluates risks in relation to child safety. The procedure will cover the work of:

- Teaching staff
- Education Support Staff
- Volunteers
- Visitors Including Contractors
- External Program Provider Staff
- Other personnel the school deems appropriate

Bittern Primary School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures. Risk management processes are reviewed annually or pre/post events/excursions/incidents.

Bittern Primary School has developed a Risk Assessment Policy for all child connected work in all environments that evaluates risks in relation to child safety. This procedure covers the work of...

Further information can be found in Bittern Primary School's Risk Assessment Policy (school website).

Promotion of Child Empowerment and Participation (Standard 7)

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

Bittern Primary School will provide strategies to promote child empowerment through student programs and parent education programs that:

- promote students' awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to child safety practices
- develop understanding of the processes students have in raising child safety in relation to child abuse issues in all school environments and outside school hours.
- cover educational strategies for resilience and healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality which is covered in the Respectful Relationships curriculum).
- operate in accordance to the school's Inclusion Policy to ensure inclusion of students who are vulnerable.
- Promotion of student voice through school council.

When the school is gathering information in relations to a complain about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child, the school will listen to the complainants' account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.

Further information can be found in Bittern Primary School's Inclusion and Diversity Policy, and Empowerment and Wellbeing Policy (school website).

BPS collects, uses and stores information in accordance with the DET School's Privacy Policy and procedures.

AIP and STRATEGIC PLAN:

The Annual Implementation Plan is based on the school's current Strategic Plan (2017 – 2020). It outlines the school's goals and targets in relation to student learning and school priorities.

REVIEW PROCESS:

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| DATE IMPLEMENTED | 1 st March 2021 |
| AUTHOR | Margaret Dolan and Kellie Christie |
| APPROVED BY | School Council |
| APPROVAL AUTHORITY (SIGNATURE AND DATE) | |
| ENDORSED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL PRESIDENT (SIGNATURE AND DATE) | |
| DATE FOR REVIEW | Term 4 2022 |
| RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW | Margaret Dolan |

REFERENCES, RESOURCES AND TEMPLATES:

- Child Safe
<https://www.childsafe.org.au/>
- Department of Health and Human Services
<https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/>
- PROTECT
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx>
- School Policy and Advisory Guide
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/spag.aspx>

APPENDICES:

The links below are in relevance to child safe documents:

- https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf
- https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_WarningSignsSchoolStaff.pdf
- https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandards_Poster.pdf
- <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafepages/home.aspx?Redirect=1>
- <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/about-us>
- <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>