

Purpose

The child safe environments policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Scope

This policy will apply to all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

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

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

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

Oakwood School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Oakwood 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, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse young people as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Oakwood 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.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Oakwood School will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. 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;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Policy and procedures

Policies and procedures outlining Oakwood School's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below.

For more information you may wish to speak to Julie FitzGerald, Assistant Principal Student Well-Being, by telephoning the school on 9703 7400.

A child-safe culture

Oakwood School's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

The school's plan for creating a child safe culture can be found on the website at www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au, Student Engagement Guidelines.

Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/ Code of Conduct

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safe Code of Conduct

Oakwood School's Child Safe Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and can be found on the school website.

Human resources practices and training

The 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 check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check. A register of all staff outlining National Criminal Record checks and Working with Children Check expiration dates is kept up to date on the school intranet and in hard copy in the Administration Office.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Oakwood 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 on the website at www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au Mandatory Reporting, Student Engagement Guidelines.

Listening to children

The 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.

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

Confidentiality and privacy

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of

information is included in the Oakwood School Privacy Policy on the website at www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au

Review Cycle

This policy was tabled at the Oakwood School Council Meeting on 18 February 2020. To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 3 years.