



Child Safety Policy

Purpose

Nepean School's Child Safety Policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining 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 applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to school council members where indicated.

The policy will apply to the school environment (see Definitions section). The policy covers both school hours and outside of school hours.

Definitions

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence; or
 - grooming; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school, school council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training 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 for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- our school buildings and playgrounds
- online school environments, including Teams, SeeSaw, wikispaces, blogs and email
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, homestays, and other school activities or events)

School staff

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

- employed by the Department of Education and Training
- directly engaged or employed by a school council
- a volunteer working with children or on the school grounds
- students undertaking placements at Nepean School, including pre-service teachers, therapy students, VET structured work placements and students undertaking Certificates in Disability 3/4 through an RTO
- contracted service providers (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

Nepean School is committed to providing a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all students, staff and members of our community. Our school recognises the importance of the partnership between our school and parents and carers to support student learning, engagement and wellbeing. We share a commitment to, and a responsibility for, creating an inclusive and safe school environment for all children and young people.

A Child Safe Culture

Nepean School place learners at the centre of all we do. Our vision and values outline our commitment to creating an innovative, empowering and safe learning environment for everyone in our school community. Our culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Vision

Nepean School's vision is to provide an innovative, inclusive and supportive environment for students with physical disabilities and complex health needs.

Values

Nepean School's values are:

- excellence and best practice in learning and teaching
- a sense of belonging through social connectedness
- creating and celebrating success together
- teamwork and perseverance
- respect
- inclusion
- communication and empowerment
- independence and a strong sense of self
- equity
- right to learn, play & communicate in a safe environment

Motto

'Together we Achieve the Extraordinary'

School Rules

- Kindness to ourselves
- Kindness to the environment
- Kindness to others

Nepean School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

We are 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.

Our child safe policies, procedures, strategies and practices will be inclusive of the needs of ALL children and young people, particularly those -

- First Nation peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- with disabilities, impairments and special learning needs
- who are vulnerable as a result of family trauma
- who reside in Out of Home Care
- who identify as gender fluid or non-binary

Every person involved in Nepean School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play 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 Safety Principles

In our planning, decision-making and operations, Nepean School will:

- place the *learner at the centre* of all we do
- create *positive partnerships with families and carers*
- *communicate regularly* with families and carers
- *acknowledge and value* the input, perspectives and ideas families share with us
- strive to create *productive relationships with all agencies* involved in a child's care
- *share information appropriately and lawfully* with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
- take a *preventative, proactive and participatory* approach to child safety
- *value and empower* children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- foster a *culture of openness* that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- *respect diversity* in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
- use the *services of interpreters* when working with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to ensure their views are heard and understood
- provide written guidance on *appropriate conduct and behaviour* towards children
- engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have *high quality staff* and volunteer supervision and professional development
- 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 concerns
- *report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment* promptly to the appropriate authorities

POLICY

Strategies to Embed a Child Safe Culture

Nepean School's culture encourages staff, students, parents and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All our child safety documents, including this policy, the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, the school's *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations* (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available in *hard copy* -

- ES Hub
- Teacher Hub
- Therapy Hub
- Principal, Assistant Principal, Psychologist's offices
- Classroom Communication Towers

and *online* (EDUVIC-Nepean Team) which all staff can access at any time, including from home.

Students have access to these documents in their class Communication Tower. Many of our students have complex communication needs and require the use of aided and augmentative communication (AAC) systems to support both their receptive and expressive language.

We have the SCOPE resource 'Speak Up and be Safe from Abuse' presented in the style of a PODD book to support students who wish to raise a concern or make a disclosure.



The 'Speak up and Be Safe from Abuse' PODD is available from the psychologist office.

Students should be supported by a trusted adult, such as their teacher, psychologist or speech pathologist when raising safety concerns.

This resource can be used in conjunction with a student's AAC system.

For support in using this resource please see the school psychologist or the student's Speech Pathologist.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. **All school staff** are required to:

- act in accordance with the school's *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- act in accordance with the *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures* (including Mandatory Reporting) at all times, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) where necessary
- undertake annual guidance and training on child safety
- act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
 - failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
 - duty of care (applies to all school staff)
 - mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, registered doctors and nurses, speech pathologists)
 - failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
 - reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch)
 - organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)
 - for more information on these obligations, see [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

As part of Nepean School's child safe culture, **school leadership**, including the Principal and Assistant Principal will:

- consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when implementing the Child Safe Standards
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings
- encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse
- ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegation.

As part of Nepean School's child safe culture, **teaching staff** are required to:

- cover Personal and Social Learning Capabilities across learning programs
- follow the school curriculum framework for Personal and Social Learning

- incorporate and follow the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support strategies and approaches
- develop a Classroom Agreement, based on the school rules, that identifies desired behaviours and shows students what these look, sound and feel like
- utilize appropriate resources to empower students, familiarise them with their rights and responsibilities and recognise and speak out against unsafe and inappropriate behaviours, including the *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* learning materials

As part of Nepean School's child safe culture, **school mandatory reporting staff** are required to:

- complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year
- read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- read the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of Nepean School's child safe culture, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school councils and school council members** will:

- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards
- undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, [Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint](#) provided to school councillors via Teams
- approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes

Schools will maintain records of the above processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

School leaders 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 Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- Assistant Principal, in consultation with Psychologist, is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 2 years.
- Assistant Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach Assistant Principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- Assistant Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in our child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

Recruitment

Nepean School follows the Department's Recruitment in Schools guide to ensure child safe recruitment practices, available on the [Department's website](#).

Nepean School also requires the following measures to ensure suitability of staff -

- all prospective **volunteers** are required to comply with our school's Volunteers Policy, including maintaining a valid Working with Children Check.
- all **Teachers** must hold current registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
- all **Education Support Staff**, including therapists, nurses, psychologist, maintenance, grounds and administration staff are required to maintain a valid employment Working with Children Check.
- all **Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Nurses and Psychologists** are required to maintain Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registration.
- **Music Therapists and Speech Pathologists** are encouraged to maintain membership with their peak organising bodies, who have developed Codes of Practice for their professions -
 - Speech Pathology Australia
 - Australian Music Therapy Association

Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims to ensure that any member of our school community - staff, volunteers, parents/carers and students feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions 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. This training occurs annually or more often as required.

Volunteers are provided with information on the roles and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, child abuse risks in the school environment, the school's current child safety policy, along with information on how they can raise a child safety concern or report any allegations or suspicions of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

New employees and volunteers induction to the school will include being provided with either –

- Volunteer Pack
- Staff Handbook

Each of which contain -

- Child Safety Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Four Critical Actions for Schools

They will also be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported by school staff to the Principal or Assistant Principal and will be managed in accordance with Nepean School's *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures* where required.

Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

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 school's *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures*, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/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.

Nepean School will never prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school's *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures*. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Nepean School will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse. The *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures* can be found in the staff hubs across the school, on the school website and in the Staff Handbook.

Risk Reduction and Management

Nepean School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school's *Child Safety Risk Assessment Register*. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We 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.

Nepean School monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions it takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety, more information can be found in the school's *Child Safety Risk Assessment Register*.

Listening to, Communicating with and Empowering Children

Nepean 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. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students can access information on how to report abuse by speaking to a trusted adult, their teacher or school psychologist.

For students with complex communication needs, the 'Speak Up and be Safe from Abuse' PODD book can be used.

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 and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents on the Nepean School website
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- the school newsletter will inform students and the school community about strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety

The school will use its health and wellbeing programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- resilience
- child abuse awareness and prevention
- rights and responsibilities

- advocacy

The school utilizes resources to deliver appropriate content to students, including –

- Resilience, Rights & Respectful Relationships
- DrumBeat
- Rocks & Water
- Seasons for Growth
- Remote Control Program
- SW-PBS

Communications

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through -

- ensuring that the *Child Safety Policy* (this document), *Code of Conduct*, and the *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy* and Procedure are available on the school website
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion
- sharing links for parent education sessions with families via email and/or Facebook
- providing strategies and tips for proactive self-care to families
- child safety is discussed during school tours and orientation programs

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 Department of Education and Training's [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

Related Policies and Documents

Related policies and documents include:

- Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Risk Assessment Register
- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [School Policy and Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)
- [School Policy and Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#).

Policy Evaluation and Review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 2 years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

Approval

School Principal:

Date of last review: