



# Child Safety Policy



## **Rationale:**

Footscray West Primary School (FWPS) is a Tribes school. We hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility and will act without hesitation to ensure their protection.

## **Aims:**

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of FWPS to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the State of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).

## **Definitions:**

**Child:** A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the school.

**Child abuse** includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving:
  - (i) a sexual offence
  - (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of:
  - (i) physical violence
  - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm
- (c) serious neglect of a child. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

**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. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

**Child neglect:** The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Child physical abuse:** Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Child protection:** Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Child sexual abuse:** Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can also be:

- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated
- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion
- sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion
- non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Mandatory Reporting:** The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Reasonable Belief:** When staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

**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) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- (b) 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). ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

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

- (a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- (b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

**Tribes School:** means we uphold the principles of being a Tribes Learning Community and aim to assure the healthy development of every child so that each one has the knowledge, skills, and resilience to be successful in a rapidly changing world.

### Implementation

This policy applies to school staff, including school employees, volunteers and contractors.

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

FWPS has a zero tolerance for child abuse.

FWPS 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 with disability.

Every person involved in FWPS 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 FWPS 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 that 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.

The policies and documents that support child safety within the school are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attendance</li><li>• Bullying prevention</li><li>• Code of conduct</li><li>• Concerns and complaints</li><li>• Cybersafety</li><li>• Duty of care</li><li>• Induction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mandatory reporting</li><li>• Privacy</li><li>• Student Engagement</li><li>• Students with Disabilities</li><li>• Visitors</li><li>• Working with Children</li></ul>
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Department related policies and documents:

- School policy and advisory guide – Duty of Care
- School Policy and Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations
- DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

### Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

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