

Background

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:

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

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an entity to which the Child Safe Standards apply must have:

1. strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements (**BHPS Child Safe Policy**)
2. a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety (**BHPS Child Safe Policy**)
3. a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children (**BHPS Child Safety Code of Conduct**)
4. screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel (**BHPS Recruitment Policy**)
5. processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (**BHPS Mandatory reporting Policy, BHPS Child Safe Policy**)
6. strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse (**BHPS Student Engagement, BHPS Mandatory Reporting**)
7. strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children (**BHPS Student Engagement Policy**)

This policy was developed in collaboration with staff, volunteers, parents and students, and applies to **all school activities** including excursions, camps and Out of School Hours Care program. All children, including Aboriginal children, children from different cultural backgrounds and children with disabilities (emotional, social and physical) are welcomed and supported at Briar Hill Primary School.

Briar Hill Primary School's Commitment to Child Safety

The Briar Hill Primary School (BHPS) Child Safe Policy demonstrates a strong commitment of the **Principal, School Council, staff and volunteers to Child Safety**. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and practices we have developed to keep all children, particularly children who are vulnerable due to age, family circumstances, abilities, or Indigenous, cultural or linguistic background, safe from any harm, including abuse.

Briar Hill Primary 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.

Briar Hill Primary School:

- Has zero tolerance for child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- Has a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety
- Is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks
- Has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers
- Is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks

- Supports and respects all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Indigenous children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and provide a safe environment for children with a disability
- Has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Our children – Valuing Diversity

The children at Briar Hill 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:

- i. promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Indigenous children
- ii. promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- iii. ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Children's Rights to Safety and Participation

Briar Hill Primary School staff and volunteers encourage children (including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability) to express their views and suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We teach children to understand their basic human rights. This includes how to recognise and understand their feelings and knowledge about their safety in all environments. They investigate this through curriculum programs including

- Life Education ?
- Family Life
- Cyber Safety
- Student Code of Conduct
- Kindness Framework
- High 5 strategy
- Zones of Regulation

We provide opportunities for children to act on their understandings and confidentially share their feelings about their well-being and safety through-

- Well-being surveys
- Well-being worry chest
- Confidential discussions with staff (yellow star)
- Attitudes to School surveys
- Educational Psychologist

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 Child Safe Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff, students and wider members of the community are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

All staff complete **Mandatory Reporting** training requirements and other **professional development** deemed necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of all children.

Recruitment

Briar Hill Primary School applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of all staff and volunteers. We interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require **police checks** and **Working with Children Checks** for relevant positions. Our commitment to **Child Safety** and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements. We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with our children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements that clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Briar Hill 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 people engaged by Briar Hill Primary School, including volunteers and tradespeople, 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.

Induction

The BHPS Staff/Volunteer Selection and Induction Policy clearly outlines job descriptions, duty statements and the roles and expectations of staff to ensure that a **child safe** environment is provided at our school. It clearly states-

- the organisational context
- duties and tasks of the role
- qualifications, experience and attributes a person must have
- the level of responsibility and supervision associated with the position
- a valid Working with Children Check and Police Check is mandatory. (See BHPS Working with Children Check Policy).

During the interview process, **additional information** is sourced to ensure an understanding of the importance of providing a **Child Safe Environment** for all children at BHPS. It is paramount that fair employment protocols are followed during this process. Additional information will include -

- motivation to work with children (including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability);personal and/or professional
- relevant and verifiable experience
- understanding of children's physical and emotional needs
- understanding of professional boundaries
- communication skills
- attitudes to children's rights and how they can be upheld
- values (honesty, integrity, reliability, fairness, and non-discrimination)
- responses from referees

All staff members and volunteers initially partake in an **induction program** that addresses all necessary processes to maintain and develop skills and capabilities including **understanding the risk of harm to children, the different types of harm, how to identify child abuse and relevant legislative requirements**. This includes a thorough understanding of the supporting BHPS Policies and relevant professional development, i.e. Mandatory Reporting. These processes and requirements are regularly addressed through meetings and professional development to ensure that all staff and volunteers are well informed of the **Mandatory Child Safe Standards**.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in Briar Hill 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 Briar Hill 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. (Please refer to our Child Safe Code of Conduct).

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.

Supporting Staff and Volunteers

Briar Hill Primary School seeks to attract and retain the best staff and volunteers. We provide support and supervision so everyone feels valued, respected and fairly treated. We follow a Code of Conduct which provides guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code of Conduct in our Induction program. New staff members are allocated mentors to ensure they are aware of our Code of Conduct practices.

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

Briar Hill 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 Orchard Grove 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.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

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).

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child harm or abuse to occur and use this to inform our policy procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to all children (including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability). As part of the two year policy review cycle, **risk minimisation** strategies are updated and implemented. Our **BHPS Risk Management Policy** clearly outlines the processes and strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse or harm. Professional Learning Team (PLT) leaders, in consultation with the Principal or Leadership team, are responsible for completing **risk assessments** for all school activities. These are completed before all school activities and housed on the school intranet for easy accessibility to all staff. Refer to the **BHPS Risk Management Policy** and **Risk Assessment** documents.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

The Principal and Leadership team have the responsibility to respond to any complaint made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. Our complaints processes are outlined in the Briar Hill Primary School Mandatory Reporting Policy.

Briar Hill 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.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed regularly as part of the school's triennial policy review schedule. A review may be triggered in advance of this date by a change in legislation, a written request to the School Council made by a member of the school community or a resolution of School Council.

Date of Ratification	December 2016
Approved By	Briar Hill Primary School Council
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	School Council President Date
Responsible for Review	Principal
Review Date	

References/ Links/ Appendices