**CHILD SAFE POLICY**

**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 applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, 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.

**Standards**

**Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety**

Rosewood Downs Primary School Leadership, assume ultimate responsibility for Child Safety at the school. We plan for and implement preventative, proactive and participatory approaches to child safety issues. We support all staff, School Council and volunteers to abide by the school’s Code of Conduct, Child Safe Policy and other Well Being policies and procedures.

The safety and wellbeing of children in our school is of paramount consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices.

**Leadership Responsibilities**

Rosewood Downs Primary School Leadership is responsible for embedding a culture of child safety in our organisation. Our school leadership takes the lead in protecting children from abuse, and must be made aware of child abuse allegations and risks and take responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

We ensure that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.

**If we believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse we will phone 000.**

Rosewood Downs Primary School is committed to ensure that Child Safe practices are embedded at the school through our Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct and Wellbeing Policies

**Role of the School Child Safety Officer**

**Provide authoritative advice**

* act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety
* liaise with the principal and school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety
* lead the development of the school’s child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety

**Raise awareness**

* ensure the school’s policies are known and used appropriately
* ensure the school’s child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework
* ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this
* be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers
* encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

**Train**

Being authoritative in providing advice by:

* keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years
* having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so
* being able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referral
* ensuring each member of staff has access to and understands the school’s child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff
* making sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and DET policies and guidance.

**Standard 2: A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety**

**Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

Rosewood Downs Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Rosewood Downs Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Rosewood Downs Primary 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.

Every person involved in Rosewood Downs Primary 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, Rosewood Downs Primary School will

* 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
* 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 issues
* Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
* Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
* Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

**Child Safe Environment**

Rosewood Downs Primary School is committed to child safety and to our children being principled, caring, balanced members of our community. We are committed to our childrens’ safety, participation and empowerment and have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety, which we follow rigorously. The school is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and all staff undertake Mandatory Reporting training.

We support and respect all children, and our staff and volunteers are committed to the cultural safety of children from diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and tolerance in our school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability

This policy informs our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

**Standard 3: Developing a child safety code of conduct**

**Code of Conduct**

Rosewood Downs Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment that respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Rosewood Downs Primary School will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Rosewood Downs Primary School will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

**Acceptable Behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

* upholding the school’s statement of commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to the school’s child safe policy
* treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
* listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child
* promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
* promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
* promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
* reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school’s leadership
* understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
* if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

**Unacceptable Behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

* ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
* develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to ‘grooming’ behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
* exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
* ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
* discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
* treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
* communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
* photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with DET guidelines or where required for duty of care purposes[[1]](#footnote-1)
* in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to DET policy [[2]](#footnote-2) or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.
* SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx> . The policy says the school should get consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. This applies every time a photo is taken. The same policy applies for excursions and school activities.

 SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/alcohol.aspx>. The policy says the school must obtain school council approval before alcohol can be consumed on school grounds or at a school activity. The policy says staff members should not consume alcohol during camps and excursions. It is silent on whether they can consume alcohol at other school events where students are present, this is a matter that the school needs to decide upon – draft text is provided in the guidance fact sheet

This Code of Conduct was endorsed/approved by the Rosewood Downs Primary School Council on 23/07/2018 for review if legislative or other changes require in the interim or no later than December 2021.

**Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse**

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 Code of Conduct. The school’s Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Refer to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Teachers Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics

Rosewood Downs 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 them. 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 or maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

**Recruitment**

The Ministerial Order specifies the following requirements for schools regarding Standard 4:

1. each job or category of jobs for school staff that involves child connected work must have a clear statement that sets out:
* the job’s requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety
* the job occupant’s essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety
1. all applicants for jobs that involve child connected work for the school must be informed about the school’s child safety practices (including the code of conduct)
2. in accordance with any applicable legal requirement or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child connected work:
3. working with Children Check status, or similar check
4. proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
5. the person’s history of work involving children
6. references that address the person’s suitability for the job and working with children
7. the school need not comply with the requirements in step (3) above if it has already made reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the information set out in steps (3)(a) to (3)(d), above about a particular individual within the previous 12 months
8. the school must ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to:
* the induction of new school staff into the school’s policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child connected work
* monitoring and assessing a job occupant’s continuing suitability for child connected work
1. the school must implement practices that enable the school governing authority to be satisfied\* that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety.

\* To be 'satisfied' is not necessary that the school governing  authority make each decision about the selection and supervision of school staff engaged in child-connected work. The school governing authority needs to be satisfied about the appropriateness of the school's arrangements that would regulate or guide other people who make such decisions for, or on behalf of the school about child safety matters and child-connected work.

**Training & Supervision**

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

We aim for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing professional development to ensure their skills for protecting children from abuse are current and consistent with legislation; 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.

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.

**Standard 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse**

Rosewood Downs 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.

Rosewood Downs has procedures in place to address Child Safety:

* A Mandatory Reporting Policy that outlines procedures for reporting Child Abuse.
* Student Wellbeing policies
* Student Wellbeing Team - Assistant Principal and teaching teams confidentially discuss and record student wellbeing issues.
* An Incident Reporting document, used to record incidents of child abuse. The reports are filed by school leadership in a secure place.

**Incident reports**

As provided on DET website and attached to this document

**Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse**

Rosewood Downs 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.

At least annually, the ***school*** will ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the ***staff***  about:

* individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of ***child abuse*** ;
* ***child abuse***  risks in the school environment; and
* the school’s current ***child safety***  standards.

At least annually, Rosewood Downs Primary School leadership will advise and/or train all school staff in the school’s policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child connected work.

Staff will be monitored for their completion of appropriate training.

A Child Safe school risk assessment will be completed annually.

**Standard 7: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment**

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

We must ensure that children feel safe to report abuse and have processes in place to ensure that students are empowered to raise any child safety concerns. We support students to develop appropriate knowledge and skills so that children can identify and communicate when they don’t feel safe.

Rosewood Downs Primary School will ensure participation is designed to be:

* Ethical
* Age appropriate and child-friendly
* Culturally respectful
* Inclusive of a diverse range of children,
* Demonstrating respect for children of all ages, abilities, social and cultural backgrounds
* Positive
* Voluntary and with informed consent.

Staff involved will:

* Be clear, honest and realistic about the boundaries of a discussion and what can change.
* Give adequate time to consult and make sure the venue is appropriate.
* Listen to what you are being told by children – they may have a very different view to you or what you expect – acknowledge, value and take seriously the views put forward by children.
* Ensure adults involved are skilful in facilitating the participation of children.
* Be clear if the discussion will be confidential or if the outcomes will be made public.
* Monitor the impact your consultation may have had on the children involved.
* Ensure you have procedures in place to provide support to any child who may be distressed as a result of their involvement or disclosure of concerns.
* Provide feedback to children about how their views had informed decision-making.

Rosewood Downs Primary School has various teaching programs designed to empower students and to give them a ‘voice’ in decision making and feeling safe:

* KidsMatter
* Bounce Back
* School based Values Education
* The Resilience Project
* Junior School Council
* ROAR
* eSmart

Through focus groups / class groups and Junior School Council examples of child participation events may include:

* Conducting a meaningful consultation with children to inform the development of the school’s Child Safe Policy – asking them about what makes the children in our school feel safe and unsafe
* Planning and identifying the risks involved in an overnight camp – it is important to be aware that adults’ views about safety may be different from those held by children.
* When planning changes to playground areas, consulting students for their opinions about safe and unsafe areas

**Definitions**

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at [www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe)

***Child abuse*** includes:

* 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 or serious emotional or psychological harm
* Serious neglect of a child

***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*** 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 means:***

* In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
* employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)* in the government teaching service or
* employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
* a volunteer or a contracted service provider

**Further Information and Resources**

**DET Related policies**

* School Policy Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
* School Policy Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations
* DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework
* DET Child Safe Standards

**DET Resources:**

* [Respectful Relationships](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/respectfulrelationships.aspx)
* [Health Education Approaches](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/health.aspx)
* [About Sexuality Education](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/physed/Pages/about.aspx)
* [Safe Schools](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/Expired/safe-schools-coalition.aspx)
* [Healthy Minds](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/health/Pages/expired/earlychildhood.aspx)
* [KidsMatter](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary)
* [MindMatters](https://www.mindmatters.edu.au/)

**School Related Policies**

* Duty of Care
* Mandatory Reporting
* Critical Incident Management
* Student Wellbeing & Engagement
* Attendance
* Bullying Prevention

**Review Period**

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 2 years and in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.

This policy was approved by School Council on 23/07/2018

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)