



Scope	All School community members - staff, students, parents / guardians, School Board members.
Responsible Officer	Principal
Contact Officer	Principal
Authorisation	School Board
Date Introduced	July 2011
Next Review Date	Sep 2022 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or as required by legislation.
Relevant Legislation or Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) • Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) • Ministerial Order 870 — Child Safe Standards — Managing the risk of child abuse in schools
Linked SPLS Policy	Child Safe Code of Conduct, Staff Employment Policy, Staff and Student Professional Boundaries, Working With Children Check Policy
Linked SPLS Procedure / Guidelines / Plans	Child Safe Standards Action Plan, Four Critical Actions- Responding to Incidents Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse, Four Critical Actions- Responding to Student Sexual Offending, Making a Child Safe Report, Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse Procedures
Linked SPLS Forms / Checklists / Registers	Child Safe Officers, Child Safe Posters, Child Safety Risk Register, Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template, Responding to Suspected Students Sexual Offending Template, Working With Children Check Card Register
Key Words	Child Safe, Child Safe Program, Abuse, Mandatory Reporting, Failure to Disclose, Failure to Protect, Grooming
Destination / Storage	School Website, Shared Google Drive, Staff Room
Communication	Staff induction, cyclical staff training/meetings

Revision / Modification			
Date	Version	Summary	Policy/Procedure
01/07/2011	1.0	New Policy	Child Protection Policy
19/3/2020	1.2	Annual Review	Child Protection Policy
10/06/2021	2.0	Name change of Child Protection Program to Child Safe Program	Child Safe Policy / Child Safe Procedures

Child Safe Policy

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04/08/2022	2.1	Addition of Support Following Disclosure	Child Safe Policy
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POLICY STATEMENT

1. RATIONALE / PURPOSE

The Child Safe Program in place at St Peter's Lutheran School defines power as the capacity to set and care for boundaries. Boundaries are the structures which support human development within community; boundaries may be personal, communal, spiritual, psychological or physical. In Christ, there is an empowerment by the gospel to recognise boundaries and prevent their destructive crossing and to care for those who have been violated. Our responsibility of leadership is to care for professional boundaries through the establishment of structures that protect them. Structures provide for support, examination, and action to ensure that School leaders, staff and students act according to boundaries that help, protect and uphold the dignity, worth and safety of each individual. (Valuing Safe Communities: Statement of values)

St Peter's Lutheran School has developed the following Child Safe Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse.

The policy forms the foundation of the School's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the School's culture with respect to child safety. It is designed to be communicated through our public website, as well as through other mediums such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for School Board members, staff and volunteers.

The School's Child Safe Policy has been approved and endorsed by the School's School Board and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

2. 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 Safe - 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 - means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- 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)

Staff - means an individual working in a school environment who is employed by the St Peter's Lutheran School.



Direct Contact Volunteers - The working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines 'direct contact' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- physical contact; or
- face to face contact; or
- contact by post or other written communication; or
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication.

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in School camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

3. POLICY

The Child Safe Policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child safe within the School;
- the creation of a positive and robust child safe culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child safe issues within the School, and;
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safe in Victoria.

3.1 Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. St Peter's Lutheran School is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Safe Program designed to keep children safe.

At St Peter's Lutheran School we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child safe responsibilities with the utmost importance, and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safe laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

3.2 Child Safe Values & Principles

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse:

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers, who have direct contact with children. (There may be some specific circumstances where a third-party contractor may not be screened by the School. If this occurs specific processes will be put in place to ensure that the un-screened contractor will not be left unsupervised in the School grounds at any time.)
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child safe training is mandatory for all School Board members, staff and volunteers, on an annual basis.

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10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. All children, especially those who are vulnerable for whatever reason, have a right to care and support.
12. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
13. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.
14. Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

3.3 Child Safe Program

St Peter's Lutheran School is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Safe Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Safe Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse, including Mandatory Reporting;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Parents/Guardians and Students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening School Board members, staff and volunteers;
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct;
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child safe training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous improvement and review.

As a part of St Peter's Lutheran School's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Safe Program.

All Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and School Board members are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the School's Child Safety Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child protection.



4. RESPONSIBILITIES

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. At St Peter's Lutheran School all members of the School Board and staff, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

4.1 School Board

Each member of the School Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Safe Policy and the Child Safe Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and Leadership team accountable for effective implementation.

4.2 Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safe Policy and the School's Child Safe Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the School.

4.3 School's Child Safe Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the School's Child Safe Officers. Our Child Safe Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safe issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child safe concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child safe within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child safe incidents.

4.4 Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safe Officers.

4.5 Volunteers

All Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safe Officers.

4.6 Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safe Policy, our Child Safe Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safe Officers.

4.7 Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'Indirect Volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students.

All Indirect Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All Indirect Volunteers are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe

Code of Conduct.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with School administrative functions.

4.8 Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and School cleaners.

This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the School, but have an agreement with the School to use the School's facilities.

The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

4.9 Direct Contact Contractors

Direct Contact Contractors are:

- those who have direct contact with students during the normal course of their work;
- those who may be in a position to establish a relationship of trust with a student notwithstanding that unsupervised access to students would be rare (for example full-time maintenance personnel); and
- any contractors whom a school is legally required to screen.

All service providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be appropriately screened and to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safe Officers.

The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

4.10 Indirect Contact Contractors

Indirect Contact Contractors are those contractors who do not meet the definition of "Direct Contact Contractor".

Refer to Third Party Contractors' responsibilities above.

All service providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Program.

The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

4.11 External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School.

The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

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All External Education Providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Program.

St Peter's Lutheran School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Reporting Child Safe Concerns

Our Child Safe Program provides detailed guidance for members of the School Board, staff and volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Safe Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Students or parents/guardians who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to report concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Safe Officers.

Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the School's Senior Child Safe Officer, Mr Tim Reimann, by phoning 03 538901626 or emailing principal@spls.vic.edu.au.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000

5.2 Support Following Disclosure

Staff should take the following steps to support and assist a child after a disclosure of child abuse or neglect is made.

The range of measures employed will depend on:

- the degree of severity of the situation
- the risk of harm to the child, and
- the capability and willingness of the parent to protect the child from harm.

After a disclosure is made:

- do not promise the child that you will not tell anyone about the disclosure
- reassure the child that it was the right thing to do to tell an adult
- tell the child what you plan to do next
- do not confront the person believed to be the perpetrator
- report the matter to one of the School's Child Safe Officers (APPENDIX A) who will be able to assist you in developing additional support strategies
- whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

5.2.1 Working together and planning support

Providing holistic support to address the trauma and wellbeing issues associated with child abuse (including exposure to family violence) is best achieved through careful planning and working in partnership with wellbeing professionals, parents/ carers and educators.

If a student is impacted by suspected abuse, and it is deemed appropriate, school staff **must**:

- **establish regular communication** between staff and the child's parent/guardian/carer (if this is safe and appropriate) to discuss the child's progress, wellbeing and the effectiveness of planned strategies. This may be undertaken through convening a Student Support Group to plan ongoing monitoring, support, and follow-up of the child's health and wellbeing (Student Support Groups usually comprise school wellbeing staff, teachers, allied health professionals and where appropriate the student and/or their parent/carer).
- **develop and implement a Student Support Plan**, which documents the planned support strategies and includes timeframes for review (where possible, these support strategies should be informed by allied health and wellbeing professionals with expertise in addressing child abuse and trauma)

5.2.2 Engaging allied health and wellbeing professionals

Where appropriate, school staff should engage allied health and wellbeing supports and services to meet the wellbeing needs of the child impacted by abuse, including exposure to family violence.

5.2.3 Referring to external supports

School staff can also refer to the wide range of non-school based support services, which specialise in providing tailored support and advice for children impacted by abuse. Refer to 1.7 Counselling/Support Organisations for contact details.

5.2.4 Providing developmentally and culturally appropriate support

While a child's background should not impact on a decision to report suspected abuse, school staff need to be sensitive to a child's individual circumstances when providing support and working with families impacted by abuse. It is a requirement under the Child Safe Standards that school governing authorities must "take account of the diversity of all children", including (but not limited to) the needs of:

Children with disabilities

When supporting a child with a disability who has been impacted by child abuse it is critical to consider the child's:

- chronological age, developmental age and their cognitive functioning in order to tailor developmentally appropriate support strategies
- vulnerability to ongoing abuse (children with disabilities disproportionately fall prey to child abuse, in particular child sexual abuse) when considering the need to make a further report and/or implement risk mitigation strategies.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

When supporting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child who has been impacted by child abuse it is essential that school staff provide culturally appropriate support.

The Principal may choose to contact Independent Schools Victoria for advice on appropriate support for the child and/or advise on culturally appropriate support strategies.

Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds



When supporting a child from CALD backgrounds who has been impacted by child abuse it is essential that the school provides culturally appropriate support. However this should not detract from ensuring the child's safety and wellbeing. Where possible, the school should work with relevant cultural support services (ensuring that the confidentiality of the student and family is maintained) and engage an interpreter when communicating with the student's family if needed.

5.2.5 Providing support for other impacted children

It can be stressful for other children involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Principals must ensure that other impacted children are offered and provided appropriate support.

5.2.6 Providing support for impacted school staff members

It can also be stressful for staff involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse including family violence. It is important to remember that staff members may also have experienced, or be experiencing family violence and/or abuse in their own lives. Principals must support impacted staff members to access necessary support.

School staff requiring wellbeing support can contact: Independent Schools Victoria on (03) 9825 7200.

5.2.7 Supporting children who are interviewed at school

All children (including children who are alleged to have perpetrated abuse) must be independently supported in any interviews conducted by Victoria Police or DFFS Child Protection at school. Where possible and appropriate the child's parents/carers should be present for these interviews. However if this is not appropriate or practicable the principal (or delegate) may be identified as the independent person or support person for the child for the purpose of the interview.

Police interviews

In the event Victoria Police schedule an interview with a child at the school, the principal (or delegate) must advise the child's parents/carers (where advised to be appropriate).

Below includes critical detail on when and how police interviews are conducted at school and what role the principal or delegate should play if they are nominated as the support person.

Police interviews at school where the child is the alleged victim or witness

- Police should only interview children at school as a matter of urgency or necessity.
- A request must be made to the principal (or delegate) who must be advised of the reason for the interview and the reason why the interview must be conducted at the school.
- The child's parents/carers should be present where it is practical and appropriate to make these arrangements. If a parent/carer is not able to be present, an independent person must be present during the interview (the role of the independent person is to ensure the child understands what is happening and to provide support).
- Principals (or delegates) may if necessary, act as an independent person where the child is a victim, unless they believe it will place them in a conflict of interest to do so.
- As an independent person, school staff must refrain from providing their opinions or accounts of events during interviews.

Police interviews at school where a student has allegedly abused another child

- If the police need to speak with a student who has allegedly abused another child this should preferably be done in the presence of the parents/carers, or another independent person that is not a

school staff member.

DFFS Child Protection interviews

DFFS Child Protection may conduct interviews of children at Victorian schools without parental knowledge or consent of the parents/carers (although this will only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the child's best interests to proceed in this manner). Below includes critical detail on when and how DFFS Child Protection interviews are conducted at school without parental knowledge or consent and what role the principal or delegate should play if they are nominated as the support person.

DFFS Child Protection interviews at school

DFFS Child Protection will notify the school staff of any intention to interview a child at the school. This may occur regardless of whether the school staff member is the source of the report to DFFS Child Protection. When DFFS Child Protection practitioners arrive at the school, the school principal or their nominee should ask to see their identification before allowing DFFS Child Protection to have access to the child.

The principal should nominate themselves or an appropriate school staff member to be present as a support person for the child during interviews. If the child is too young to understand the significance, a supportive adult should be provided even though the child may not have consented or requested this to occur. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the DHHS Child Protection practitioner should always authorise the staff member of the school to receive information regarding DHHS Child Protection's investigation. This could be conducted verbally or in writing using the relevant DHHS Child Protection proforma. As an independent person, school staff must refrain from providing their opinions or accounts of events during interviews.

5.3 Counselling/Support Organisations

Organisation	Description	Contact
The Lookout	The Lookout is a Victorian Government initiative in partnership with the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, providing information, evidence based resources and services to help professionals respond to family violence (including professionals in mainstream services, like schools). The Lookout includes a service directory, with a lookup function, where you can enter a postcode and identify locally available family violence support services.	www.thelookout.org.au
Safe Steps	Safe Steps offers free access to professional support to women and their children living with family violence, through a comprehensive range of services to enable them to become – and stay – free from violence.	http://www.safesteps.org.au/ 1800 015 188 (24/7 advice line)
1800 RESPECT	1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732), is a 24 hour, seven days a week National Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence hotline. Victims of family violence and/or sexual assault are encouraged to talk or chat online to a counsellor from the service	www.1800respect.org.au 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

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Centres Against Sexual Assault	There are 15 Centres Against Sexual Assault, which work to ensure that women, children and men who are victim/survivors of sexual offending have access to comprehensive and timely support and intervention to address their needs.	http://www.casa.org.au/ 1800 806 292
Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital	Provides support and assistance to children and young people affected by sexual offending or problem sexual behaviours.	https://www.rch.org.au/gatehouse/ (03) 9345 6391 After hours: (03) 9345 5522
Children's Protection Society	Provide advice and support to children and families to help them break out of the cycle of abuse, neglect, poverty and disadvantage through a creative portfolio of programs, resources and services.	http://www.cps.org.au/ (03) 9450 0900
Australian Childhood Foundation	Provide recognised programs that counsel and support children to recovery; help professionals who work with children to better support at risk children; raise awareness of the causes and consequences of abuse	http://www.childhood.org.au/home/ 1800 176 453
Djirra	Djirra is an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault. They work directly with families affected by violence.	https://djirra.org.au/ 1800 105 303
Child Wise	Child Wise is Australia's leading international child protection charity committed to the prevention and reduction of sexual abuse and exploitation of children around the world	http://www.childwise.org.au/ 1800 991 099
headspace	headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds, along with assistance in promoting young peoples' wellbeing. This covers four core areas: mental health, physical health, work and study support and alcohol and other drug services. Information and services for young people, their families and friends as well as health professionals can be accessed through this website, headspace centres, online counselling service eheadspace, and post-vention suicide support program headspace School Support.	http://headspace.org.au/ 0458 037 955