

FRANKSTON SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL CHILD SAFE POLICY

Rationale:

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act, 2015, to introduce child safe standards into law. The standards aim to promote cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

Aim:

To create and maintain a child safe organisation that aligns policy, planning and practice to the seven key Child Safe Standards.

Implementation:

Frankston Special Developmental School will implement the Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students at the school. Frankston Special Developmental School will promote an organisational culture that manages the risk of child abuse and neglect through widespread understanding and compliance of the seven standards set out below:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, through effective leadership arrangements

Standard 2: A Child Safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

Standard 3: A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

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

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

See: Appendix 1: Implementing the Standards
Appendix 2: Informing the school community about the Standards

Evaluation: This policy will be reviewed annually.

This Policy was ratified by school council on

11th August, 2016

Appendix 1: Implementing the Standards

Standard 1:

The Principal and Assistant Principal will lead the implementation of the Child Safety Policy at Frankston Special Developmental School. Within their scope of practice, they will:

- Provide authoritative advice, leading the development of the school's child safety culture.
- Raise awareness, ensuring the school's policies are known and used appropriately and that parents/carers are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Encourage a culture of vigilance and proactivity with regard to identifying key risk indicators.
- Keep skills up to date with appropriate training, including the annual completion of the online module for Mandatory Reporting.
- Have an awareness of and participate in (when necessary) processes and procedures with regards to outside agencies such as Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
- Ensure detailed, accurate records are kept secure.
- Ensure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and Department Education and Training (DET) guidelines.

Standard 2:

Frankston Special Developmental School is committed to child safety:

- We are committed to ensuring our students are safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse and neglect, and all allegations and safety concerns are treated with seriousness in alignment with our policy and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety which we follow rigorously.
- Our school has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Our school is committed to the safety of children from culturally diverse backgrounds including those children from indigenous backgrounds.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- Students at Frankston SDS are taught to be as independent as they can with regards to their own personal care routine in order to minimise the amount of physical contact they need from others (*See I Can Be Safe protective behaviours program*).
- Staff at Frankston SDS, including casual relief staff, are trained in how to assist with personal care routines in order to minimise the amount of physical contact they have with students.
- Staff at Frankston SDS, including casual relief staff, are instructed in ways of giving students as much privacy as possible during personal care routines.

Standard 3:

The following Child Safety Code of Conduct clearly spells out professional boundaries and acceptable and unacceptable adult/child relationships and behaviours. All staff members at our school are expected to read and to adhere to the Child Safety Code of Conduct at all times.

FRANKSTON SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Frankston Special Developmental School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which 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, DET 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 Frankston Special Developmental 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 Frankston Special Developmental 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, community access and social events as well as 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
- 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/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 and/or the school's welfare staff, police, Child First, Child Protection as mandated by law

- 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 (see Mandatory Reporting Policy)
- 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/carer 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 school policy or where required for duty of care purposes
- consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances in the school environment, or at other school events where students are present

Standard 4:

Frankston SDS acknowledges that strong human resources practices promote child safe school environments and reduce the risk of child abuse. Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is the responsibility of everyone.

- All staff engaged in child-related work, including volunteers are required to hold a current Working With Children Check or hold Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.
- All future position descriptions will include the *Child safe environments* clause as provided in the Recruitment in School's Guide and applicants will be informed of their role in implementing the school's child safety policy.
- Every effort will be made to establish the identity, credentials and history of applicants when recruiting and selecting staff.
- Frankston SDS supports its staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision, to develop their skills to protect children from abuse.
- New employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand Frankston SDS' 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.
- Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services, and Victoria Police in accordance with Mandatory Reporting guidelines.
- When recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action we will strive to be thorough, transparent and rely on evidence.

Standard 5

Frankston SDS takes all allegations and reports of abuse seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to align their practice with DET Mandatory Reporting guidelines (see *FSDS Mandatory Reporting Policy*).

FSDS staff will respond to any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused by following the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse* as detailed by DET.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActionsChildAbuse.pdf>

Where a belief has been formed that, while a child is not subject to abuse but there are significant concerns for his/her well-being, a report will be made to Child First.

Clear and comprehensive notes will be recorded on the *Responding to Suspected Child Abuse* template of all reports made to Child First or Child Protection.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/schcritical.aspx>

All students for whom welfare concerns are raised will have a well-being/safety plan, (developed by the welfare team in consultation with leadership and the student's teacher) and accurate records kept of its implementation

Referrals will be made to other supporting agencies where appropriate.

Standard 6

FSDS takes a *risk management* approach to all school activities. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we will proactively identify and manage risks of abuse to our students. We will continue to implement programs empowering them to recognise and avoid potential unsafe situations; use a school-wide approach to positive behaviour; and undertake risk assessments of activities and environments to identify risks to child safety. These risk assessments will include identification of safety issues relating to:

- The differing age-range and abilities of students at FSDS.
- The disproportionate number of adults involved in the lives of students with a disability compared to the rest of the community, and the potential opportunities for abuse this creates.
- The ability of our students to make judgements about the safety/dangers of activities; the risks of their own and others' behaviours; the environments they are in and the appropriateness of their social interactions with both familiar and unfamiliar people.
- Specific risks associated with the FSDS environment, (for example, recreation areas, personal care facilities, sheds), school activities (excursions, camps, transport) personnel (staff, visitors, volunteers, contractors).
- The safety of students who use social media, YouTube, videos/photography.

In addition:

- All Risk Assessments will be communicated to staff, documented and recorded.
- Strategies that mitigate the risk of abuse (for example, increase the likelihood of detection, remove triggers for inappropriate behaviour, reduce the permissibility of inappropriate behaviour) will be communicated to, and implemented by staff.
- The effectiveness of the strategies will be monitored as part of the annual cycle of Risk Management assessment and communicated to School Council.
- Where a risk assessment is rated as more than low, further risk mitigation strategies will be identified and implemented.
- Training in FSDS child safety processes will be provided to all new, temporary and volunteer staff as part of their induction.
- Awareness of child safety processes and procedures will be embedded in role descriptions and performance review processes.

At no time will staff:

- Prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to an appropriate person external to the school.
- State or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation.
- Require staff to make a judgement about the truth of the allegation of child abuse.
- Prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

Standard 7

Frankston SDS acknowledges that empowering students to have a voice encourages engagement and supports the development of resilience and positive self-esteem. The school will continue to implement practices that develop trusting relationships and value students' participation in decision-making.

- The FSDS Policies and Procedures Welfare Manual outlines how the school community develops a positive school climate, and teaches students to manage their own behaviour in a respectful and positive way. It describes:
 - The mission and values of the school
 - The student engagement policy
 - The School-Wide Positive Behaviour program, including the FSDS rules and expectations of behaviour for all members of the school community
 - Consistent consequences for inappropriate behaviour
 - Processes for managing challenging behaviour
 - Processes for students and staff impacted by challenging behaviour
 - Processes for managing absenteeism
 - Guidelines for managing suspension and expulsion
 - Guidelines for supporting students whose welfare is at risk
- The FSDS I Can Be Safe protective behaviours program incorporates:
 - Public and Private
 - Body awareness
 - Managing emotions
 - Sexuality and respectful relationships
- The Cyber Safety program teaches students safe use of digital technology and social media and outlines consequences for misuse:
 - Cyber Bullying Policy
 - Social Networking Policy
 - Inappropriate Content/Sexting Policy
- The Welfare and Therapy teams support students and families to access services; assist students to engage with and access the curriculum and provide counselling to students, parents and carers.
- Student Voice is encouraged through the FSDS house activities, encouraging team spirit and participation across age-groups.
- The Student Representative Council encourages student leadership and participation in decision-making about matters concerning student activities.

Appendix 2: Informing the School Community of the Standards

FSDS school leadership is required to inform the school community about their arrangements to meet the following safety standards set out in Ministerial Order No. 870. The school community is defined as:

- The School Council
- Staff
- Parents/carers and families
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors

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

- The school community will be informed of the strategies to embed a culture of safety at FSDS, the roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies and how the strategies are being put into practice via:
 - The FSDS website
 - The Fortnightly Newsletter
 - A standing item on meeting agendas as appropriate
 - Via involving community members in policy review of policy
 - The FSDS Information Manuals for staff, parents and carers

Standard 2&3: A Child Safety Policy of Commitment to Child Safety and a Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

- FSDS school leadership will publish the school's child safety policy and code of conduct on the school's website and ensure the community is aware that:
 - Child safety is the responsibility of the whole school community.
 - FSDS has zero tolerance of any abuse of children.
 - Staff will receive training and support to carry out their responsibilities under the standards.
 - Volunteers will receive information about the school's child safety policy and a copy of the code of conduct as part of their induction.
 - The FSDS Code of Conduct for Child Safety will be incorporated into the induction manual for staff, parents/carers and contractors working at the school.
 - A sign will be posted at the entrance to the school advertising FSDS as a child safe school, with zero tolerance of child abuse.

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

- The FSDS Mandatory Reporting Policy will be published on the school's website and copies made available on request at the office.