



16 Clevedon Road, The Basin, Vic 3154
PO Box 215, The Basin, Vic 3154
P: 7038 6508
ABN: 70617696894
E: info@fernbrook.com.au
W: www.fernbrook.com.au

Fernbrook School Child Safety Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the school on info@fernbrook.com.au and we will provide support for you to access this document.

Purpose

The Fernbrook School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

Scope

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers, and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to directors and board members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

Definitions

The following terms in this policy have specific definitions that can be found at:
<https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards-definitions>

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school staff
- school governing authority
- student
- volunteer.

Statement of commitment to child safety

Fernbrook School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people, and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies, and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Roles and responsibilities

School leadership team

Our school leadership team (comprising the principal and business manager) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

The Principal will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes, and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families, and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and board meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing, and prevention of and responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

School staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our *Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

School Board of Directors

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school board members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item (at least twice per year) at board meetings, acknowledging that related discussions will organically take place when discussing items of importance
- undertake annual training on child safety ([Child Safe Standards - School Council Training](#))
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school's Board of Directors and members
- when hiring directors or members, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Fernbrook School has nominated the principal to be the child safety champion and implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#). Our child safety champion is the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The child safety champion is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the child safety champion if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The child safety champion is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Fernbrook School works collaboratively to mitigate child safety risks and reviews its related policy documents annually or if there is a child safety matter committed.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The *Child Safety Code of Conduct* includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At our school we identify, assess, and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our *Child Safety Risk Register* is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Fernbrook School is committed to maintaining and improving the safety of both physical and online environments by (this list is not exhaustive):

- Adequately supervising students at all times at school, on excursions and camps.
- Informing students and their families about appropriate use of the school's technology, safety tools, and how to seek help and report concerns including cyberbullying and online grooming.
- Informing students about spaces that are off limits, including out-of-bounds areas, storerooms, and staff rooms.
- Creating a culture where the entire community understands they can confidently disclose a child safety matter to the principal or appropriate member of staff.
- Keeping records of incidents that occur, including accidents and medical events.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At Fernbrook School, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected. We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Regular and respectful use of learning content that promote understanding and celebration of First Nations' culture and history.
- Displaying Indigenous flags around the school, in individual classrooms, the school's reception/main office area, and the multi-purpose hall.
- Acknowledging country in formal school meetings and official digital communications.
- Celebrating events such as Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week throughout the school.

Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Fernbrook School, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through the following strategies:

- Holding daily whole school meetings that provide opportunities for student voice
- Holding regular leadership meetings in the High School that cultivate student advocacy and agency
- Facilitating weekly Respectful Relationships and Wellbeing sessions in each class. These sessions promote respect, positive communication, and student safety.
- An active culture of communication between school and home to address any child safety concerns or behavioural issues.
- Integrating wellbeing practices throughout curriculum delivery very regularly.

We inform students of their rights through education opportunities at our whole school meetings, leadership meetings, formal and informal communication between staff and students, and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers.

We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns by speaking to their teachers, principal, or referring to the Child Safety related policies found on our school website.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student, and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

To empower children to know their rights and cultivate safety, we employ the following strategies:

- Weekly Respectful Relationships and Wellbeing sessions for each class

- Education opportunities and discussions in whole school meetings
- Training for staff on inclusive teaching practices and completing modules on Be You by Beyond Blue.
- Creating and adhering to the Fernbrook School Statement of Effective Learning by prioritising student wellbeing above all else in the classroom and other school settings.

Family engagement

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Fernbrook School we are committed to providing families and the school community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- Discussing the content and areas of improvement of these policies with the Parents and Friends Committee.
- Promoting child safety in our school communication and newsletters.
- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on our school website.
- Newsletters or Sentral Portal news feed items will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school in each classroom and the Multi-Purpose Hall.

Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths, and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

A range of related policies available below, provide more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

Suitable staff and volunteers

At Fernbrook School, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we hold space for discussion regarding a prospective employees understanding and experience in adhering to the Child Safe Standards.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children Check or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record as deemed necessary:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by facilitating annual reviews of Child Safe Standards and ensuring all relevant safety checks are up to date and compliant.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our *Volunteers Policy*, which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

Child safety knowledge, skills, and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices

- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues. A continued commitment to provide training for staff to recognise mental health and employ strategies to support students and staff will be pursued.

School Board of Directors training and education

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the board is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Fernbrook School child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices

Complaints and reporting processes

Fernbrook School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct, or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's *Complaints and Grievances Policy*.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including board directors and members) must follow our *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Communications

Fernbrook School is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the *Child Safety Policy* (this document), *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, and the *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure*
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school
- updates in our school newsletter and Sentral Parent Portal
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school board meetings.

Privacy and information sharing

Fernbrook School collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to the [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

Records management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education and Training for non-government schools. Information about this can be found in our *Record Keeping Procedures Policy*.

Review of child safety practices

At Fernbrook School, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices. The principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.
- The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school

Related policies and procedures

This Child Safety Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Digital Technology Code of Conduct
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Student Code of Conduct
- Parent Code of Conduct

Name of Document: Child Safety Policy

Document Number: FSPOL-CHI-000821

Approved by: School Board

Implemented by: The Principal

Last reviewed: November 2022

Next Review Date: November 2024