



# Bulleen Heights School

Autism Spectrum Disorder

## Child\_Safety\_Policy

### Commitment to Child Safety

Bulleen Heights School has a strong commitment to child safety.

We want our students to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all our students, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns are treated seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a student's safety, which we adhere to rigorously.

Bulleen Heights School is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and reducing and removing these risks.

This school has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our school is committed to regular training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We are committed to providing a safe environment for students with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

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

### Our students

We promote diversity and tolerance at Bulleen Heights and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students

We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

We ensure that students with a disability are safe and can participate equally to the best of their ability.

### Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with students in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with students. All staff and volunteers, as well as students and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

## **Training and supervision**

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

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and students) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse. We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect students from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal students, the cultural safety of students from linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of students with a disability.

New employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting students from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards students is safe and appropriate. 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.

## **Recruitment**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with students. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

## **Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of students is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to students and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

## **Managing Personal Hygiene**

Staff may be required to assist students with the management of their personal hygiene routine. Assistance with personal hygiene may be required at school during community programs or on camps. The supervision of personal hygiene routines must be conducted by a school member of staff in a manner that maximises the child's safety, comfort, independence, dignity, and privacy.

## **Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or students, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

## **Legislative responsibilities**

Bulleen Heights School takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

**Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police. **Failure to protect:** People of authority at Bulleen Heights School will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

All personnel who are mandatory reporters will comply with their duties.

## **Risk management**

In Victoria, schools are required to protect students when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our students.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child on social media).

## **Regular review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and students have the opportunity to contribute.

## **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

Bulleen Heights School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all students, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they witness inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- witnessing suspicious behaviour.