



Help for non-English speakers:

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school on
03 53324544

PURPOSE

Leadership and staff at Black Hill Primary School acknowledge the importance of an environment that contributes to the health and wellbeing of all staff and students. This policy confirms our commitment to:

- providing a safe, inclusive and empowering school environment for students, families, staff and visitors
- delivering safety education in one or more learning key areas of the curriculum as a part of a whole school approach to health and wellbeing
- ensuring families, students and staff are key partners in promoting a safe environment.

As a health promoting school, we will promote the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and families through learning, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment, and developing community links and partnerships.

POLICY STATEMENT

Background

Schools should be a safe place for everyone including students, teachers and other staff, families and members of the local community. The involvement and commitment of the whole school community is required to achieve a culture in which safe and respectful schools are everyone's concern and responsibility. It is essential that all schools promote and provide a supportive learning community where all students feel, and are, safe. Students have a fundamental right to learn in a safe, supportive environment and to be treated with respect. School staff also have the right to teach, work and participate in an environment that is safe and supportive. Similarly, parents and other local community members have a right to feel safe, supported and respected in the school context.¹

Whole school engagement

It is recognised that every member of Black Hill Primary School has an impact on students' health and can contribute to creating a safe environment. All members of our school community, including staff, students, families and volunteers, will be supported to meet this policy.

DEFINITIONS

Safe environments: For the purposes of this policy and for the Healthy Schools Achievement Program, the 'Safe Environments' health priority area focuses on supporting physical safety, cultural safety and cyber safety.

Physical safety: Protection from harm and hazards that can cause injury. Identified risks are managed and minimised.

Cultural safety: An environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; 'where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together'.²

Cyber safety/Online safety/Internet safety/E-safety: The safe and responsible use of technology including use of the internet, electronic media and social media in order to ensure information security and personal safety. There are three main areas of risk to safety:

¹ Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs 2010, National Safe Schools Framework (revised 2011) http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/NSSFramework.pdf

² Williams R, 1999, Cultural safety – what does it mean for our work practice? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, vol. 23, no.2, pp213–214.

- Contact: being subjected to harmful online interactions with other users (including bullying)
- Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm.³

Procedures and responsibilities

Leadership and commitment

- Staff, families and students are involved in guiding the development and implementation of the whole school Safe Environments Policy and practices through student voice and agency and School Council.
- Staff, families and students are provided with information about policy requirements, with opportunities to provide feedback and input.
- [Child Safe Standards](#) are followed and the school complies with [Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#).

Healthy physical environment

- Students and visitors are appropriately supervised.
- Action is taken to minimise risks, remove hazards and protect students from harm within and outside school grounds and for excursions.
- Buildings, facilities and equipment are well maintained and any safety issues are responded to promptly.
- Students and staff are required to wear appropriate personal protective equipment when necessary to reduce injury risk.
- All trips and hazards are addressed to promptly.
- The school is inclusive of vision and hearing impaired students and parents with adjustments made within the environment to cater for them.
- The school has adequate wheel chair access and disability parking zones.
- Automatic doors are operational in key areas of the school when required.

Healthy culture

- Diversity and cultural practices are considered when implementing this policy and safety practices.
- There are clear expectations and agreements for safe, respectful and responsible behaviours at the school and online for students, staff and families.
- Clear processes are in place to identify, report and respond to unsafe behaviours.

Student teaching and learning

- Students are educated about positive safety behaviours, including:
 - road safety
 - correct use of protective equipment
 - correct use of facilities and equipment
 - identifying and responding to safety hazards
 - cyber safety and respectful online behaviour
 - cultural safety and inclusive behaviour.
- Staff are supported to access professional development and resources about safety education and child safety requirements.

Supported staff

- OH&S guidelines are met to ensure a safe work environment for staff.
- Safety information and policy requirements are included in staff orientation/induction.
- Staff are supported to learn about and practice safe behaviours, including cultural safety, cyber safety and physical safety through the policy review cycle.

Families and community partnerships

- Safety information is provided to families, such as information and practical strategies to support safety in the school and at home.
- Partnerships are established with relevant organisations and health professionals to support safety practices where appropriate such as Occupational Therapists and Vision Australia for orientation and mobility environmental assessments.
- Processes are in place to seek support from specialist organisations if issues of safety are identified such as Worksafe and Asbestos identification.

³ Kodo Education, 2015, Safeguarding Essentials: What is E-Safety, Retrieved from <https://www.e-safetysupport.com/stories/166/what-is-e-safety#.WydANdlzaUJ>

RELATED POLICIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Relevant legislation and policy documents

- [Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [National Safe Schools Framework](#)
- [DE Guidelines for School Playgrounds – Playground safety management: Section 3.2.5 \(2012\)](#)
- [Victorian Government OHS Planning Documents](#)
- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#)

Related school policies

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Bullying Prevention
- Staff Health and Wellbeing
- Child Safety

Created date	July 2020
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Endorsed by	Black Hill Primary School Council
Endorsed on	July 2023
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APPENDIX A

Child Safety Reporting Procedures at Black Hill Primary School

For students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at Black Hill Primary School they should start with their teacher, Mrs Westlake or Miss Bishop.
- Help Hotline

Managing disclosures made by students

When managing a disclosure you should:

- listen to the student and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you").

When managing a disclosure you should AVOID:

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).

General procedures

Our school will follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (Four Critical Actions) when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

All staff at our school who believe that a child is in need of protection, even if it doesn't meet the threshold required for mandatory reporting or the staff member is not a mandatory reporter, should in the first instance, speak to Donna Bishop or Penny Westlake or should make the required reports to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police as necessary.

At our school the Principal and/or Assistant Principal will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

Reporting suspicions, disclosures or incidents of child abuse

Responsibilities of all school staff

If a school staff member reasonably suspects or witnesses an incident of child abuse or receives a disclosure of child abuse, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid and call 000.
- Speak to the Principal and/or Assistant Principal as soon as possible, who will follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in filing cabinets in AP's office.
- If the staff member is a mandatory reporter and reasonably believes that a student has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse from which the child's parents have not protected the child, they must ensure that a report to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police has been made by the Principal or Assistant Principal. If the report has not been made by another staff member, the mandatory reporter must make the report.
- If the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child, they must ensure that a report to Victoria Police has been made by the Principal or Assistant Principal. If the report has not been made by another staff member, the staff member must make the report.

In circumstances where a member of the leadership team disagrees that a report needs to be made, but the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that the child is in need of protection and/or has been the victim of sexual abuse, the staff member must still contact DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police to make the report.

Responsibilities of the Principal and/or Assistant Principal

The Principal and/or Assistant Principal is responsible for promptly managing the school's response to an incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the incident, suspicion or disclosure is taken seriously. The Principal and/or Assistant Principal is also responsible for responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.

If the Principal and/or Assistant Principal receives a report from a school staff member or member of the school community of a suspicion, disclosure or incident of child abuse, they must:

- Follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) as soon as possible, including:
 - Responding to an emergency
 - Reporting to authorities/referring to services
 - Contacting parents/carers and
 - Providing ongoing support.
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure, including actions taken using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in AP's office. They are also responsible for ensuring that any staff member who reported the incident, disclosure or suspicion to them also makes and keeps notes of the incident.

- At Black Hill Primary School, the Principal and/or Assistant Principal will be responsible for ensuring that there is a prompt response to the disclosure and that the child is appropriately supported.

If the Principal and/or Assistant Principal is unavailable, their designated replacement will take on the role and responsibilities described in this section.

Duty of care and ongoing support for students

Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students. All staff must ensure that the Principal and/or Assistant Principal or other appropriate staff member is aware of any incidents, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible after they occur. This will allow appropriate supports to be put in place for the student affected.

For school visitors, volunteers and school community members

All community members aged 18 years or over should be aware of their legal obligations – see *Failure to disclose offence* above, in this Policy.

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details see the Four Critical Actions - <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActionsChildAbuse.pdf>

There is no requirement for community members to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to DHHS Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, and where disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.