



# GRUYERE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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## GRUYERE PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Child Safety Policy

#### PURPOSE

The child safety policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

#### SCOPE & AUDIENCE

All staff, volunteers, contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

**Policies and procedures outlining school's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below.**

#### CHILD SAFE CULTURE

The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

The school's plan for creating a child safe culture can be found on the website or at the school in the policies book.

#### OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Gruyere Primary School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, staff and volunteers. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Gruyere Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Gruyere Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability. Every person involved in Gruyere Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

#### School's principles for child safety:

In its planning, decision-making and operations Gruyere Primary School will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;

6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;

7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

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

## **OUR CHILDREN**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

## **OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school.

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct. The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

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 children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children 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.

We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) 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 and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's 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 (please refer to the Gruyere Primary School code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). 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

The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children.

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. 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 actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

Registered schools have an important responsibility for keeping children safe.

All registered schools are required to meet child safety requirements for staff selection, supervision and management (clause 10 of Ministerial Order No. 870).

The following information outlines important considerations for Gruyere Primary School when recruiting and selecting staff. It provides a checklist for ensuring that the selection process has regard to the applicant's suitability to undertake child-connected work and a checklist to ensure natural justice for applicants in the staff selection process.

Gruyere Primary School will ensure:

1. Each job or category of jobs for school staff that involves child connected work must have a clear statement that sets out:
  - the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and
  - the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.
2. All applicants for jobs that involve child connected work for the school must be informed about the school's child safety practices (including the code of conduct).
3. In accordance with any applicable legal requirement or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child connected work:
  - Working with Children Check status, or similar check;
  - proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
  - the person's history of work involving children; and
  - references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
4. The school need not comply with the requirements in step (3) above if it has already made reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the information set out in steps (3)(a) to (3)(d), above about a particular individual within the previous 12 months.
5. The school must ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to:
  - the induction of new school staff into the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child connected work; and
  - monitoring and assessing a job occupant's continuing suitability for child connected work.
6. The school must implement practices that enable the school governing authority to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety.

## FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL

The safety and wellbeing of children 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 using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.**

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

## PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, 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.

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the DET Complete Privacy Policy.

## LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Our organisation takes our 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:** Gruyere Primary School recognises that it is 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. Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

The School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. 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 (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

## REGULAR REVIEW

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

## ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Gruyere Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations. We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above). 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)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

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

## DEFINITIONS

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

**Child abuse** includes—

- any act committed against a child involving:
  - a sexual offence or
  - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
  - physical violence or
  - serious emotional or psychological harm
  - serious neglect of a child.

**Child-connected work** means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

**Child safety** 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 environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff being: an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
- a minister of religion.

## RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

• Victorian Government, Education & Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, January 2016, Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools, Ministerial Order No. 870.

• Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (2016) Information Sheet. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2: A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety

• Commission for Children and Young People (2015) A Guide For Creating A Child Safe Organisation, Version 2.0. • A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST

• Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

• Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations - elearning module

• State of Victoria (2010) Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people: A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children's Services and Victorian Schools

[School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)

[School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)

[DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework](#)

[School Privacy Policy](#)