

Andale School Child Safe Strategies and Practices



**Andale
School**

Est 1981

Andale School is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. The school has zero tolerance for child abuse.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the Andale School Council, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Andale School community.

Andale School supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. Andale School is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

Andale School complies with Ministerial Order No. 1359 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and is committed to the implementation thereof.

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for authorising the Child Safe Policy, for overseeing its implementation and for managing the risk of child abuse. The Principal reports to School Council on Child Safe matters, and provides an update at each council meeting. All policies, strategies and practices are developed within Council and are monitored by Council.

The Principal is responsible for the culture of the school. This document is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of the school, to ensure that all children are safe.

All staff have an important role to play in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our students.

The Principal is the designated child safety officer.

Communication

Child Safe Standards and student wellbeing are recorded as regular agenda items for both school council and staff meetings. This allows the principal to share relevant and up-to-date information and for attendees to raise student wellbeing matters for discussion, action and future planning.

The school's bi-weekly newsletter will make reference to school activities that are relevant to the Child Safe Standards, including the use of external agencies to provide and support relevant programs. Students and families are regularly advised that they have access to the support of the school Psychologist and other school staff. A Student Support Group will be established for each student and will meet each term to review student learning, engagement and wellbeing.

All staff receive training in, and documentation relating to the Child Safe Standards including completing Online Modules: Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations annually. As part of their induction process and as outlined in the school's *Checklist for the Sharing of School Documentation*, all staff receive a Google Drive link to Child Safe information, including the *Child Safe Standards*, the school's *Code of Conduct*, *Child Safe Responding and Reporting Obligations* (including mandatory reporting), all school policies and procedures including the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*, *Statement of Values* and *School Philosophy*. Child Safe documents are published on the school's website, and are available from the school office.

Students and parents/carers receive documentation as outlined in the school's checklist including those listed above and the *Student Code of Conduct* and the *Parent Code of Conduct*.

All persons working directly or indirectly with students at the school will be advised that Andale School is a child safe environment and that our school actively promotes the safety and wellbeing of all students. All persons working directly or indirectly with students at the school will be provided with Andale School Code of Conduct.

Student agency and wellbeing

Children who experience learning failure early in life are vulnerable and at risk of social and economic exclusion. This risk is significant for children with language and learning difficulties who face unique challenges for their entire lives.

Students enrolled at Andale School have additional learning needs that can impact communication and engagement. The individual needs, communication, learning difficulties and vulnerability of each student should be taken into account, with additional support available for the school Psychologist, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and Special Education qualified Teachers.

Students are supported to have agency for their own wellbeing and care.

Each student is provided with individual Personal and Social Capability goals as part of their Individual Learning Plan. Through Personal and Social Capability goals, class teachers include activities that will support the development, in both formal and informal situations, of:

- Self confidence
- Self esteem
- Assertiveness skills
- Building positive relationships
- Identifying feelings
- Valuing difference
- Developing vocabulary

A Psychologist is employed by the school to support students through 1:1 sessions and to provide school wide programs through external agencies, such as Family Planning Victoria. The school Psychologist is the point of contact for students, staff and parents in the event of support being required for the wellbeing of students in her capacity as a therapist.

Strategic Planning

The school's Strategic Plan provides a focus on communication and supporting students to develop literacy and numeracy skills through the provision of evidence-based practices. The school's focus on improving learning outcomes empowers our students to achieve equality, fairness and respect while reducing the risk of discrimination. Education empowers our students to stand up for their own rights and the rights of others. Child Safe is embedded into the school's Strategic Plan for the period 2023-2025 as a stand-alone area of focus.

Recruitment

A thorough and robust recruitment process will ensure suitability of employees at Andale School. Successful applicants for positions must have relevant qualifications and experience.

Professional references are required from all applicants and a minimum of 2 referees will be contacted by the school. Referees will be asked directly about the applicant's suitability to work with children.

A selection criteria is provided to all applicants relevant to the position.

All potential applicants will participate in a face to face interview.

All applicants are advised in writing that: *Andale School is a child safe environment. Our school actively promotes the safety and wellbeing of all students, and all school staff are committed to protecting students from abuse or harm in the school environment, in accordance with their legal obligations including child safe standards.*

Teachers will be required to provide VIT registration details. Education support staff will be required to provide a WWC. Validity of WWCs will be checked at: online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/checkstatus.doj

The Principal and Business Manager will ensure all employees, contractors and volunteers who require a WWC clearance as per the Worker Screening Act will provide evidence of clearance. The Principal and Business Manager will maintain an ongoing record of WWCs held by the school, and will review expiry dates at the beginning of each school term.

All staff will complete a Fit and Proper Persons Declaration before employment and provide proof of identification.

Employed staff must provide proof of identity signed by an Authorised Witness.

All staff will complete the Online Modules: Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations annually.

Monitoring and Assessing Continuing Suitability for Child-related Work

All staff are provided with this document (Child Safe policies, practices and procedures) on employment. Staff participate in yearly review of Child Safe policies, strategies and practices and evaluate implementation.

All staff complete annual Online Modules: Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations.

Staff complete annual professional learning on child abuse risks in the school environment and on the school's current child safety standards. This training includes a review of all school Child Safe documentation, risks and strategies and practices.

Twice yearly ongoing appraisal and feedback is provided on Child Safe practices through staff Performance and Development Plan. Child Safe maintained as a priority area within all plans.

All held Working With Children cards must be checked by the Principal and the Business Manager at the beginning of each school term for Education Support staff, contractors and volunteers continuing work onsite. Surnames and card numbers are checked for currency at www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

The Principal is responsible for ensuring all teachers maintain VIT registration, with annual check of registration at <https://nexus.vit.vic.edu.au/employer/s/>

Ongoing supervision of staff is maintained to ascertain their continuing suitability to work with children. Students are supervised and taught by teams of teachers/allied health and education support staff during class time and playtimes. A qualified teacher is always on duty to supervise students/classes. This applies to school based learning programs and in situations where an external agency is providing programs and where volunteers and contractors are onsite.

Individual staff must never be isolated with a student in a situation where they cannot be observed, i.e., through an open door or clear line of sight through windows.

All role descriptions are clear and include reference to responsibilities regarding child safety.

Monitoring and Assessing Continuing Suitability for Child-connected Work

At all times students are supervised by a qualified teacher employed by Andale School. A minimum of two Andale School staff supervise all students programs, including all incursion and excursion events, with a ratio of no less than 2 staff to 10 students.

Where possible, arrangements will be made for repairs and maintenance to be made outside of school hours, when students are not onsite. Where this is not possible, all staff will be advised via Xuno of the visitor to the school and a description of reason for being onsite. The Principal (or assigned staff member) will remain with the visitor when to visitor

is unknown to the school, a one off visit, onsite for a short period. For example, in the case of deliveries to the school.

Contractors that attend onsite are required to provide a current WWC card, which will be initially checked by the Principal at www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au, or at sign in using the Xuno kiosk.

An assessment of whether or not a visitor to the school requires a WWCC must be made based on whether the visitor/volunteer likely to have any contact with children while performing their work duties?

All visitors completing child-related work will be provided with a copy of the school's Code of Conduct.

A reference check will be completed where a contactor or volunteer is to be engaged in ongoing child-related work inclusive of proof of the person's identity, information about any essential or relevant professional or other qualifications, the person's history of work involving children and references that address the person's suitability for the job and for working with children.

Update staff on risk register, strategies and practices, and highlight the risk of a person completing child-related work and the need to monitor and supervise students.

Maintain a Child Safe Risk Register, with consideration of risk that Contractor(s) on the premises may commit abuse, with strategies to mitigate this risk.

Procedure for Responding to Allegations of Suspected Child Abuse

Refer to the Four Critical Actions for Schools posters (Google Drive Policies and Procedures) and seek support from the Principal and school Psychologist.

What is Child Abuse?

Some examples of Child Abuse are:

- Physical injury which results from abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse which refers to a situation in which a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity, and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child
- Emotional abuse which involves a parent or caregiver repeatedly rejecting the child or using threats to frighten the child
- Neglect which occurs when a parent or caregiver fails to provide the child with the basic necessities of life; food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision; to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

In accordance with the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), and the School's Child Safe Responding and Reporting Obligations (including mandatory reporting) Policy, if a mandatory reporter forms a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse, a report must be made to Child Protection Services as soon as possible. The Principal should be informed.

The Commission for Children and Young People (1300 782 978) should be contacted immediately where there is a belief that the abuse is occurring within the school.

For concerns where the immediate safety of the child is not compromised, a report should be made to The Orange Door. The Orange Door is a Victorian Government network that connects anyone experiencing family violence, or needing assistance with the care and wellbeing of children and young people, to a range of services providing ongoing safety and wellbeing supports. The Principal should be informed. All concerns and observations should be recorded in a confidential file.

Approval is not required; however, staff can seek support from the Principal and school Psychologist.

It is important that all concerns and observations are documented in a confidential file, that notes and records are accurate and made as soon as possible. It is also important to record all actions taken. This process of documentation may occur over a period of time. Documentation and records must be stored securely to protect the privacy of all parties involved. Information about child abuse should remain confidential.

These strategies and practices should be reviewed if legislative or other changes are required, or at least every two years, to ensure they are up to date with current practice and the requirements of the Child Safe Standards.

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| Approved by | Andale School Council |
| Date | 18 March 2024 |
| Review date | Term 1 2026 |

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:
- separating alleged victims and others involved
 - administering first aid
 - calling **000** for urgent medical and/ or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
 - identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.
- Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report internally to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Employee Conduct Branch
 - DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office.
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or school chairperson
 - Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**

All allegations of reportable conduct **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - Employee Conduct Branch
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - Diocesan education office
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

AREA
North Division **1300 664 977**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 960 391**
West Division (Metrol) **1800 075 589**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**.

CHILD FIRST
<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>

ORANGE DOOR
<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-oranges-door.html>

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE
1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT
1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

VICTORIA
(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT
The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence <http://www.lookout.org.au>.

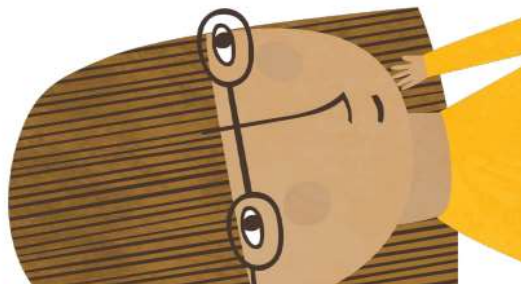
Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.

PROTECT

THE EDUCATION STATE

VICTORIA
Government

CECV
VICTORIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION OF ASSISTANT



FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Student Sexual Offending

PROTECT

THE EDUCATION STATE

VICTORIA | Education and Training

CECV

DISCIPLINE

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act by following the 4 critical actions as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a suspicion that a student is a victim of a student sexual offending and/or a student has engaged in sexual offending.
- You **must** act even if you are unsure and have not directly observed student sexual offending (e.g. if a victim, or another person tells you about the offence).
- You **must** use the **Responding to Student Sexual Offending** template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

1 IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO AN INCIDENT

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000** for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report incidents, suspicions and disclosures of student sexual offending as soon as possible:

VICTORIA POLICE

All instances on **000**

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

If you believe that:

- the victim's parent/careers are unable or unwilling to protect the child
- the student who is alleged to have engaged in the student sexual offending is:
 - aged over 10 and under 15 years and may be in need of therapeutic treatment to address these behaviours
 - may be displaying physical and behavioural indicators of being the victim of child abuse*

INTERNALLY

ALSO report internally to:

- School Principal and/or leadership team (if instances)
- Government Schools DET Security Services Unit
- Catholic Schools: Diocesan education office

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your Principal **must** consult with Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection to determine what information can be shared with parents/careers of all impacted students. They may advise:

- not to contact the parents/careers (e.g. in circumstances where contacting the parents/careers is likely to adversely affect a Victoria Police investigation or where the student is a mature minor and has requested that their parent/carer not be notified)
- to contact the parents/careers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for students who are victims to a student sexual offence AND students who have engaged in a sexual offence. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

This support should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals, outlining support strategies. Strategies may include the development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA

- North Division **1300 664 977**
- South Division **1300 665 795**
- East Division **1300 360 381**
- West Division (Rural) **1800 075 699**
- West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**

CHILD FIRST

www.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or contact your local police station

DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT
(03) 9589 6366

STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT
(03) 9651 3622

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 8267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7195**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA/A
(03) 9825 7200

