



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Andale School is a small independent school for children for whom it has been established require additional support to learn effectively in an environment that can provide evidence based interventions and small group learning. Andale provides programs where students are taught at their own level in a supportive and non-competitive environment.

Special education qualified teachers see each student as an individual and tailor Victorian Curriculum based programs to meet their needs.

Andale School offers a safe, supportive environment, breaking down barriers and building students' trust and confidence.

Andale School acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands that we are privileged to walk upon and teach and learn on each day - the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. We recognise the special contributions of First Nations peoples and cultures, which enrich and shape the cultural identity of this nation.

This policy is supported by the *Andale School Child Safe – Strategies and Practices* document.

Commitment to child safety

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 accordance with their legal obligations, including the Child Safe Standards.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where students feel safe and supported in their learning.

Purpose

The Child Safe policy sets out the principles and framework governing the school's behaviours and activities that enact the Child Safe Standards and which aim to keep all children safe from harm.

Scope

This policy applies to members of the governing board, the principal, all school staff, volunteers, parents, visitors and contracted service providers working in the school environment.

The school's duty of care is non-delegable. This policy applies when children are learning with an external provider.

Definitions of the terms below can be found at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards-definitions>

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- mandatory reporting
- reportable conduct
- school environment
- school staff
- school governing body (School Council)
- student
- volunteer

Role of the School Governing Body

The Andale School Council has responsibility for ensuring that the school implements and prioritises Child Safe Standards.

The Council will champion and model a Child Safe culture at Andale School. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report child safety concerns, providing a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone at Andale School has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Principal will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. The Principal will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

Student Voice

Andale School is a child-centred organisation. We actively seek to include student views and ideas in our organisational planning, including teaching and learning and wellbeing.

We respect the rights of students and provide them with information about their rights, including the right to be safe. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our school. We regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We provide programs that empower students to understand their rights through ongoing and age-appropriate sexuality education.

All students are able to access support from the school based Psychologist. Our school Psychologist proactively supports students who require support.

All staff work to develop positive and trusting relationships with students.

Students are provided with information about positive, safe and healthy relationships through class programs and individual Personal and Social Capability goals. Students are taught about the ways they can seek appropriate support.

Families and communities

Andale School recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with the Principal and members of staff.

Andale School provides information to families and the community about our Child Safe policies and practices including through:

- publishing the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Code of Conduct on our website
- sharing information with parents about school programs that support student wellbeing and safety
- including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in our newsletter

Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families

Andale School is committed to creating an environment where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all meetings and events
- where possible, consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- learning about and celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at Andale School, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture

Valuing diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this we:

- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- offer students and families, through our enrolment process, the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- deliver programs that reflect the diversity of our students, their interests and cultures
- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities

Code of Conduct

Andale School has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Staff, volunteers and the School Council must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

All third-party contractors, volunteers and visitors to the school are also required to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Recruiting staff and volunteers

Andale School puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for staff and volunteers, as outlined in the recruitment and screening practices. We only recruit staff and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children.

We require a Working with Children Check, Police Checks and referee checks for staff and volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children's personal information. We require staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid.

Supporting staff

Andale School is committed to ensuring that all leaders, staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Andale School assists its staff to incorporate child safety considerations into decision making and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

All staff and volunteers are required to complete annual child safety training.

Staff and volunteers will receive supervision to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct.

Complaints and reporting

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All complaints and concerns will be managed in line with the PROTECT Child Safety procedures.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, staff at Andale School must report it in accordance with Mandatory Reporting. Staff are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police.

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

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow our **Child Safe 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: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Record keeping and information sharing

Andale School is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related safety concerns.

Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

The school will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Andale School may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and participation in the Child Information Sharing Scheme. Andale School will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety.

All shared information will be documented as a record of the school's response to a complaint and will be securely stored within the student file.

Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct

Andale School will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies. Potential breaches will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective actions.

Review

Andale School will review all Child Safe practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. These reviews are overseen by School Council and will be informed by consultation with children, families and staff.

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