



MELBOURNE
RUDOLF STEINER
SCHOOL

Our School is a place of sanctuary for childhood.

Here we know that every child is a sacred gift to the world.

We, the adults, are entrusted with their care.

Each of our thoughts, words, and deeds are to be beneficial to their wellbeing.

Our task and responsibility is to nurture the young people, and to help them accomplish their growth to full human freedom.

To this end the school has its existence

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY POLICY

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse. This policy and the School's approach are intended to be proactive, preventative and responsive. It is an assumption, as we endeavour to comply with changes in the regulatory environment in which we operate, that the School already regards child safety as being of utmost importance and that we provide a safe environment for the children that we teach. While compliance with Ministerial Orders and the Child Safety Standards is mandatory and every member of our staff bears a real responsibility for this compliance, achieving a culture of child safety is an active and ongoing process which should be reflected in every aspect of our school, rather than stored in documents to be periodically reviewed and consulted.

Initial Policy Development : Damian Stone and Arthur Curl

Date last reviewed: July 2022 Damian Stone & Jessica Moyes
7th Dec 2022 Jenny Heslop

Next major review: July 2024

Culturally Safe Environment

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is an inclusive school, welcoming students from a diverse range of cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. We strive to be culturally sensitive to the needs of indigenous Australians through on-going discussions and professional development. Throughout our curriculum there is an embedded reverence, acknowledgement and study of cultures, religions and languages from around the world, including Australia's indigenous peoples. Our attitude towards inclusion permeates the whole curriculum, and culture of the school in both including and celebrating diversity. As a school we actively celebrate and appreciate the strengths of indigenous Australians culture.

Specific examples where we strive to create a culturally safe environment for Indigenous Australians include:

- Telling stories from the Wurundjeri people and other parts of Australia;
- Learning about indigenous plants and animals and how first Australians cared for the natural environment;
- Learning about how indigenous peoples viewed the seasons and the importance of Australian Indigenous astronomy;
- Acknowledgement of country during morning verse in some classes;

- Kindergarten resources available to children such as books of traditional stories, props and musical instruments used from time to time;
- Use of traditional instruments for plays, and storytelling;
- Stating the acknowledgement of country at the start of school events;
- Documenting the acknowledgement of country on school correspondence such as emails;
- Acknowledgement of country to all new staff and volunteers on induction;
- Having a welcome to country smoking ceremony as part of our school fair;
- Incorporating awareness of first Australians' culture where possible in activities such as studies of rock art, folk dancing and making tools;
- Inviting Wurundjeri elders to speak with staff about their country and educate us about ways that we can be more inclusive;
- As a school ensure that our curriculum, school policies and procedures actively support celebrate and appreciate the strengths of indigenous Australian culture;
- Inclusion Program for any students from any walk of life including diverse cultural linguistic backgrounds;
- Ensuring that policies and procedures relating to bullying, behaviour and code of conduct excludes any form of racism against any child including Aboriginal and Torres strait Island children and families;
- School plaque acknowledging Wurundjeri people outside central office; and
- Cross curriculum priorities – All curriculum documents summarising the element of history and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. For further Indigenous Education content please see MRSS curriculum documents.

School Commitment

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be a primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views are respected 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, children who are unable to live at home, international students, gender diverse students as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific ongoing 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.

Every person involved in Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School understands that this responsibility extends beyond the physical school premises and school day and includes online environments, other locations provided for students use and those provided through third-party providers.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Melbourne Rudolf Steiner 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 that all staff, teachers trainees, volunteers have appropriate induction and education on the schools child safety policy;
8. 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;
9. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly;
10. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
11. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk;
12. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families, carers, volunteers on child safe practices and strategies; and
13. Ensure that all staff, teachers trainees, volunteers have appropriate induction and education on the schools child safety policy.

Policy

At Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to creating a culture of safety for children that reflects the finest qualities of humanity. The School regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Safety Program designed to keep children safe.

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our School practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct. They are the subject of review by the College of Teachers and training on curriculum days.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child-safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all new staff, volunteers who have contact with students, third party contractors and other education providers (extra lesson, after school care) who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all staff and volunteers* who have contact with children. Examples of volunteers who have contact with children may include volunteers involved in School Camps and excursions, coaching, sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.
13. Children from vulnerable circumstances or marginalised minority groups including children who are unable to live at home, international students and gender diverse students have the right to special care and support.

Culturally Safe Environment

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Specific examples where we strive to create a culturally safe environment for Indigenous Australians include:

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- Inclusion Program for any students from any walk of life including diverse cultural linguistic backgrounds;
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Child Safety Program

This program provides the framework for:

- The development of practices, policies, roles and procedures that promote child safety within the School;
- The creation of a positive and robust child safety culture;
- The promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the School; and
- Complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety in Victoria.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Safety Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, physical and digital environments and the characteristics of the student body. Our Child Safety Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

Clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated risk indicators;

- Clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- Strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers, third party contractors, other education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- Procedures for recruiting and screening, staff and volunteers;
- Pastoral care strategies designed to support students and keep them safe;
- Policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;

- A child protection training program;
- Information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- Guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- Policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- A schedule for reviewing and changing the systems.

As a part of Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School's induction process, all staff and volunteers are required to complete an induction on the content of our Child Safety Program.

All staff and volunteers are provided with ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, volunteers, third party contractors and other education providers are supported and supervised by the College of Teachers to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child safety.

Responsibility

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. At Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School all members of the staff, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

Board of Directors

Each member of the Board of Directors is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Safety Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for working with the College of Teachers to ensure effective implementation.

The College of Teachers

The College of Teachers is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the School's Child Safety Program are implemented effectively, reviewed regularly and that a strong and sustainable child safety culture is maintained within the School.

The School's Child Safety Coordinators

A number of staff members are nominated as the Child Safety Coordinators which form the child safety group, but the responsibility is understood to be shared by all staff. In some cases, including the Class Teachers, the role of Child Safety Coordination will be understood to be a normal part of their responsibilities rather than a further role to be performed. Our School's Child Safety Program Coordinator will receive additional, specific training with respect to child safety issues. The Child Safety Program Coordinator is the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. If that person is unavailable any member of the child safety group can be contacted. The child safety group are also given responsibility for promoting and maintaining a culture of child safety within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents, risk management and review and strategies processes. The Child Safety group meet regularly to promote, identify and respond to any ongoing

matters related to child safety and wellbeing. Damian Stone is responsible with and on behalf of the school for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach Damian if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

The College of teachers are responsible in collaboration with the child safety group and Damian Stone for child safety policies and procedures. This includes the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Child Safety Program Coordinator and Welfare Support

Damian Stone

Email: damian.stone@mrss.vic.edu.au

Mobile: 0428 307 553

Child Safety Coordinator Secondary School.

Jo Stirrat

Email: jo.stirrat@mrss.vic.edu.au

Mobile: 0418 599 654

Child Safety Coordinator Early Childhood/Primary School and Education Support

Ali Staley

Email: ali.staley@mrss.vic.edu.au

Mobile: 0419 949 664

Child Safety Coordinator Education Support

Steph Lockland

Email: stephanie.lockland@mrss.vic.edu.au

Mobile: 0421 800 356

Child Safety OHS Representative

Tegin Fulcher-Rutkowski

Email: tegin.fulcher-rutkowski@mrss.vic.edu.au

Phone: 03 9876 2633

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Coordinators.

Volunteers

All volunteers are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Coordinators.

Third Party Contractors

All service providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Program. All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the contractors.

Other Education Providers

An Other Education Provider, for the purpose of the School's Child Protection and Safety Policy, is any organisation that the School has arranged to provide any element of the education provided by the School, to a student or students enrolled at the School. The delivery of such may take place on School premises or elsewhere. All Other Education Providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Program. All other education providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the external education provider.

Our Child Safety Program provides detailed guidance for members of the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Safety Coordinators. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Third party contractors, other education providers, indirect contact volunteers, students, parents/carers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the School's Child Safety Coordinators or a member of The Administration Group. Communications regarding child safety will be treated confidentially.

Work Experience

During work experience training, students will be made aware of employer's responsibility towards them in regards to child safety. Students are encouraged to discuss any concerns they have about any person at their Work Experience placement whose conduct towards them concerns them in any way. They can discuss with their parents and with a school staff member who comes to visit them on placement or contacts them. The students may ask to leave their work experience placement if they feel uncomfortable about any behaviours towards them during their Work Experience placement. MRSS requests that the student and/or parent contact the Work Experience coordinator immediately if there are any issues or concerns . MRSS sends a Work Experience employer document which is sent to all Work Experience employers and signed by them to acknowledge their responsibilities to the student and their safety during the student placement.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

A Child Safety Code of Conduct lists behaviours that are acceptable and those that are unacceptable in our physical and online environments. It provides a high-level statement of professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and acceptable and unacceptable relationships. When individuals are clear about behavioural expectations, they are more likely to act appropriately with each other and with children. When everyone is aware the Code of Conduct and the reasons it is so important to uphold, the School environment becomes much more transparent and people are accountable for their behaviour. Above all, a Child Safety Code of Conduct helps to protect children from harm.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct set out below is designed to stand-alone. It can also be incorporated in whole or part into broader Codes of Conduct that are developed within the School, including other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular staff at the School. The Code is made available to all staff, volunteers, families and students.

This Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults towards students. The Code serves to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promote child safety in the School environment. It provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. Where a staff member breaches the Code, Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School may take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal. The Administration Group of the College of Teachers will be responsible, as delegated by the College and the Directors, for receiving, investigating, making findings, reporting and recommending action to the College in respect of any alleged breaches of this Code of Conduct. It is understood to be normal practice for the Administration Group to seek comprehensive professional advice on matters of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. The School will review the Code every two years.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has the following expectations of behaviours and boundaries for all adults interacting with students within our School community. This includes all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, volunteers, third party contractors, other education providers and parents/carers.

Adults are required to:

- Behave as a positive role model to children:
- Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children:
- Be vigilant and proactive with regard to child safety and child protection issues:
- Provide age appropriate supervision for students;

- Comply with School policies with respect to child protection;
- Treat all children with respect;
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse children;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children unable to live at home, international students and gender diverse students
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children;
- Use positive and affirming language toward children;
- Encourage students to 'have a say' and then listen to them with respect.;
- Take all students concerns about themselves or others seriously;
- Respect cultural, religious and political differences;
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact, and socialise;
- Intervene when students are engaging in inappropriate behaviour towards others or acting in an unkind, humiliating or vilifying way;
- Report any breaches of this Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- Report concerns about child safety to one of the School's Child Safety Coordinators and ensure that your legal obligations to report allegations externally are met;
- Where an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure, as quickly as possible, that the child involved is safe;
- Call the Police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a student's safety; and

- Respect the privacy of children and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.

Adults do not:

- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards children or expose students to such behaviour;
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with children.;
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children or discriminate against any child based on culture, race, gender, ethnicity or disability;
- Engage in open discussions of an adult nature in the presence of children;
- Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a child including making sexually suggestive comments or sharing sexually suggestive material;
- Engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours including doing things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves;
- Engage in any form of physical violence or assault towards a child including unreasonably rough physical play;
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a child;
- Engage in any form of physical, social or verbal behaviour that has the potential to cause a child serious emotional or psychological harm;
- Develop 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students);
- Engage in undisclosed private meetings with a child that is not your own child;
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a child through any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a child;
- Engage directly with a student through personal or private contact channels including social media, email, instant messaging, texting, etc. except where that communication is reasonable in

all the circumstances related to schoolwork or extracurricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter;

- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a child without parental / carer consent;
- Post online any information about a child that may identify them, such as their full name, age, e-mail address, telephone number, residence or school,
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- Engage in any form of communication, behaviour or action that breaches the Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School child safety code of conduct; or
- Consume alcohol or illicit drugs or be intoxicated or under the influence of illicit drugs within a student's presence.

Reporting Child Abuse

MRSS use the Four Critical Actions for Schools – responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse as a Template from the Victorian Government Child Safety for reporting.

Reporting child abuse concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Safety Coordinators who will assist in filling in the appropriate documentation.

Potential reports may be of:

- an offence against a child;
- an offence by a staff member of the School;
- an offence by another adult in the School Community or beyond;
- an offence by another child;
- the suspicion of an offence; or
- a risk that may contribute to an offence occurring.

It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities. It should be noted that reporting a matter internally does not release you from other legal and regulatory obligations that you may have. Please see the School's Duty of Care in Relation to the Reporting of Sexual Offences Policy for more information.

Third party contractors, other education providers, volunteers, students, parents or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the School's Child Safety Coordinators.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know' basis.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, the Police should be contacted immediately on 000.

Our Child Safety Staff - Make a Report or discuss an issue...

Name	Position (role)	Phone	Email
Damian Stone	Leading Child Safety Coordinator (Student welfare)	0428 307 553	Damian.stone@mrss.vic.edu.au
Jo Stirrat	Healthy Relationships Coordinator (Support Ed)	0418 599 654	joanne.stirrat@mrss.vic.edu.au
Ali Staley	Child Safety Coordinator (Early Childhood/Primary)	0419 949 664	ali.staley@mrss.vic.edu.au
Tegin Rutkowski	OHS Safety Officer	03 9876 2633	tegin.rutkowski@mrss.vic.edu.au
Steph Lockland	Child Safety Education Support	03 9876 2633	Stephaine.lockland@mrss.vic.edu.au

11. DUTY OF CARE IN RELATION TO SEXUAL OFFENCES POLICY

Staff Member(s) Responsible:	Arthur Curl and Damian Stone
Date last Reviewed:	July 2022. Damian Stone, Jessica Moyes
Next Major Review:	2024

Rationale/Introduction

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to fulfilling its duty of care to all students and specifically students under the age of 16 in relation to the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), which was amended in 2014 to include the offences of: (i) failing to disclose a sexual offence¹; (ii) grooming for sexual conduct²; and (iii) failing to protect a child from sexual offence³.

Aims

Through the application of this policy, we at Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School aim to:

- Ensure all reasonable steps are taken so that students are safe from sexual abuse and that they feel safe at all times;
- Enable the governing body members, all persons in positions of authority, care or supervision, all employees of the school and where applicable, students of 18 years or over to understand their role and responsibility in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people under the age of 16 in accordance with the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic);
- That is, to ensure individuals associated with the school who have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk, take steps to reduce or remove any substantial risk that a student under 16 years of age will become the victim of a sexual offence, including the recognition of 'grooming';and
- Ensure all members of the school community aged 18 and over understand their reporting obligations in accordance with the Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic).
- That is, to ensure all members of the school community aged 18 and over (who are not Mandatory Notifiers) who form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16, report that information to police

This policy is underpinned by the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).

Guidelines

The College of Teachers will:

- Ensure that all staff members, volunteers, students aged 18 and over, school board members and the school parent community are aware of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) Policy and have access to a copy of the policy;

¹ Crimes Act Vic 1958, s.327.

² Crimes Act Vic 1958, s.49B.

³ Crimes Act Vic 1958, s.49C.

- Ensure that all adults within the school community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child under 16 years to the police; and
- Provide support for staff in undertaking their responsibility in this area.

All staff members will:

- Be aware of the school's Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) Policy and the school's Child Protection – Mandatory Notification Policy;
- Report any reasonable belief of child sexual abuse to the police or fulfil their obligation as Mandatory Notifiers; and
- Provide an educational environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

Parents/Caregivers/Volunteers/Students who are 18 and over will:

- Be aware of the school's Child Safety Policy and the school's Child Protection – Mandatory Notification Policy; and
- Understand their obligations to report a reasonable belief of child sexual abuse to the police.

Specific Offences Failure to Disclose

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. The failure to disclose offences imposes a clear legal duty upon all adults aged 18 and over to report information about child sexual abuse to police.

Definition

Under section 327 of the Crimes Act, any person (including any staff member) of or over the age of 18 years who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 years of age must disclose that information to police, as soon as it is practicable to do so. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence, except in limited circumstances such as where the information has already been reported to DHS Child Protection.

The offence applies to all adults in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children.

Forming a 'Reasonable Belief'

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- A child states that they have been sexually abused;
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused;
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused or is likely to be abused; or
- Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

Procedure

Any adult aged 18 or over who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to Victoria Police by dialling 000 (or otherwise to a member of the police force of Victoria).

An adult will not be guilty of an offence if they do not report in the following circumstances:

- The victim is 16 years of age or older and does not have an intellectual disability that limits his/her capacity to make an informed decision; and he/she does not want the information reported to the police;
- The victim has disclosed the information in confidence in the course of a therapeutic relationship with a registered medical practitioner or counsellor; or
- The victim turned 16 years of age before 27 October 2014.

Reasonable excuses for failing to comply with the requirement include:

- A reasonable belief that the information has already been reported to police or DHS Child Protection disclosing all of the information; or
- A reasonable fear that the disclosure will place someone (other than the alleged perpetrator) at risk of harm.



A person in the school may have a mandatory reporting obligation under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. In summary, this obligation requires teachers and registered nurses to report concerns about child welfare to child protection authorities within the Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS passes all allegations of child sexual abuse to police so it will be a reasonable excuse for not reporting to police if a person has made a report to DHS or reasonably believes a report has been made to DHS (please refer to the school's Child Protection – Mandatory Notification Policy).

Grooming

Section 49B of the Crimes Act relates to the offence of 'Grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years'. The offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity. The offence can be committed by any person aged 18 years or over.

Definition

The offence of grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

The offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's engagement in or involvement in sexual conduct, whether with the groomer or another adult.

Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

The sexual conduct must constitute an indictable sexual offence. This includes offences such as sexual penetration of a child, indecent assault and indecent act in the presence of a child. It does not include summary offences, such as 'upskirting' and indecent behaviour in public.

Procedure

Should any member of the school community aged 18 and over become aware of grooming behaviour by a person aged 18 years or over, they should notify the police and the Administration Group of the College of Teachers (or other senior staff member) immediately.

It is the responsibility of the College of Teachers and/or others associated with the school with authority or responsibility, to take action upon becoming aware of grooming behaviour to protect (so as to reduce or remove a substantial risk) in accordance with the 'failure to protect' offence (see below).

- Any member of the School Community aged 18 years or over forms a reasonable belief of grooming taking place
- Member of School community notifies the police and the Administration Group of the College of Teachers
- Take steps to protect the child, including reduction or removal of risk
- Subject to guidance from the police, investigate according to School's policies

Failure to Protect Offence ⁴

Section 49C of the Crimes Act makes it a criminal offence in Victoria for a person in authority to fail to protect a child under the age of 16 from criminal sexual abuse. This applies where there is substantial risk that a child under the care, supervision or authority of an organisation (including schools) will become a victim of a sexual offence by an adult associated with the school. The person in a position of authority may

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be guilty of an offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Definition

If a person associated with the school who, by reason of their position, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the school, they must not negligently fail to reduce or remove the risk.

That is, as soon as a person in authority becomes aware of a risk of child sexual abuse, they will be under a duty to take steps to remove or reduce that risk.

A person who has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a risk will include the school directors, college of teachers, Admin group, and senior staff, as well as teachers by virtue of their responsibilities. For the avoidance of doubt, any member of staff or person associated with the school who knows of a substantial risk that a child will become a victim of a sexual offence should notify the Admin Group as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Procedure

When aware of a substantial risk of criminal sexual abuse to a child in the school from an adult aged 18 or over associated with the school, the College of Teachers and/or its delegated representatives will act to reduce or remove the risk. The person will be removed from any child-related role pending an investigation.

1. College of Teachers and/or its delegated representatives becomes aware of risk of sexual abuse to a child at the School from an adult aged 18 years or over associated with the School Community
2. College of Teachers and/or its delegated representatives takes immediate action to reduce or remove the risk to the child. Such an action might include, if the adult concerned is a staff member, immediately suspending that staff member pending an investigation
3. Notify police and/or other authorities
4. Subject to guidance from the police, investigate according to School's policies

Resources

- [Department of Justice: Betrayal of tRust Factsheet: The new failure to disclose offence](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new)
<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new>
- [Department of Justice: Betrayal of Trust Factsheet: The new 'grooming' offence](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence)
<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence>
- [Department of Justice: Betrayal of Trust factsheet: The new failure to protect offence](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to)
<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>

RECORD DOCUMENTATION STORAGE SHARING AND RETENSION

Guidelines Prepared Date: July 2022 By: Damian Stone, Alison Pritchard, Jessica Moyes

Review Date: July 2024

MRSS acknowledges that clear and accurate records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: Records Management – School Records and the Public Record Office Victoria.

MRSS ensures that documented records are created to document any identified incidents of grooming, inappropriate behaviour (including breaches of institutional codes of conduct) or child sexual abuse and all responses to such incidents.

Recording Documentation

Guidelines for recording documentation should be clear, objective and thorough and should be created at, or as close as possible to, the time the incidents occurred.

The documentation should clearly show the author and who was present and the date created and any correspondence with any other parties verbal or written.

Examples of documentation that needs to be stored with the initial report.

- Letters or emails making allegations or in relation to allegations (if this occurs verbally, a record should be made of this).
- Incident reports, witness statements.
- Records, including notes, of meetings or discussions about the actual or alleged incident.
- Investigation records.
- Referrals to law enforcement authorities and briefs of evidence supporting cases, including evidence gathered for cases that do not proceed.
- Reports received from medical practitioners, health professionals, psychologists, teachers, coaches, social workers, legal officers, counsellors, chaplains and case officers in relation to actual or alleged incidents.
- Records documenting support and remedial action, i.e. claims, assessments, support, counselling, compensation, redress.
- Records of cases or decisions by bodies, tribunals, courts.
- Rosters, sign in sheets, personnel records of employees and volunteers, records detailing student work placements.
- Enrolment, attendance and absence records of children.

- Permission forms from parents and carers.

Storage of Records

Records relevant to child safety and wellbeing, including child sexual abuse, will be stored and maintained in an indexed, logical and secure manner.

This includes to:

- Store the records securely so that they cannot be lost, damaged, altered or tampered with over time; and
- Store the records confidentially so that privacy is protected and only authorised people are aware of them and can access and use them for legitimate purposes.

Retention of Records

- Retain the records in such a way that they can be accessed and used for authorised purposes.
- Retain the records in regards to any allegations or documentation related to child safety indefinitely.
- Ensure that contextual information is retained with the records, so that future users are able to understand them and that they can be used to provide good evidence.

Sharing of Records

MRSS keeps all private records in relation to any matter of child safety inaccessible to general staff and will only share this information with third party persons or institutions when required to do so via mandatory reporting and by law. MRSS procedures follow the Public Records Office Victoria guidelines; Retention and Disposal of School Records, Records retention and Retention and Disposal Auth re Child Sexual Abuse Incidents and Allegations.

CHILD EMPOWERMENT and FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

This statement is currently being developed July 2022: Primary Faculty, Damian Stone, Jessica Moyes and Jo Stirrat

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to preventing sexual abuse and ensuring child safety and wellbeing. We understand that empowering every student to speak their truth and know they will be heard and respected is key to building trust and preventing any form of child abuse. One of the school's core beliefs is that it is ideal for every individual child to live and learn in an environment free from any form of abuse. For this to happen we strive to create an atmosphere and culture of care and respect for all humans and the environment around us. Our school doesn't rely on one element or policy for a student to feel empowered and safe and that they belong. We believe that all of the following; school culture, curriculum, teaching style, value on community, professional development, policies and procedures and reverence for festivals and community celebrations help to create a place where every child feels empowered, safe, valued, respected and engaged within their class and the school community.

We aim for all students to develop a healthy rapport with their peers, teachers and education staff. We embrace our families and community and see them as an integral part of the rich fabric of our school.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School, in collaboration with other Steiner schools in Australia, has a set of overarching core principles. These are documented by Steiner Education Australia and provide a picture of empowering and engaging children and developing a culture of healthy relationships throughout the school community.

Core Principles of Steiner Education

- The recognition of the unfolding spirit of each individual informs all aspects of the school.
- Steiner/ Waldorf Education fosters social renewal by cultivating individuals who serve an ethical world future.
- Anthroposophical insights into child development guide the educational program and practice.
- Steiner / Waldorf schools support creative freedom to teach within the shared agreements of the schools' collegiate.
- The conscious establishment of human relationships fosters individual and community health.
- Spiritual Development for sustaining professional growth is an ongoing activity for the collegiate of teachers and staff and is supported by the board.
- Collaboration and shared responsibility provide the foundations of school leadership and governance.

SEA Core Principals -

<https://www.steinereducation.edu.au/steiner-education/core-principles-for-australian-steiner-schools-2021/>

The Australian Steiner Curriculum and the teaching methodology encompassed thereby are based on the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of Steiner Education. From these foundations our strategies and methods of empowering the child and educating the child on body autonomy and are layered throughout the educational programs.

For more information on the methodology of Steiner Education and teaching principles please see the address below from STEINER EDUCATION AUSTRALIA.

<https://www.steinereducation.edu.au/curriculum/foundations/>

Early Childhood/Primary School

Note: This policy is currently being developed

At MRSS sexual abuse prevention in Early Childhood and the primary school years is based on child empowerment, family engagement and is not a standalone program but is incorporated into our school culture and learning programs in the following ways.

Understanding the Child's Home Environment and Family Culture

- As part of the enrolment process, families are requested to inform the school of any known special needs or circumstances (eg, psychological trauma) relevant to the child.
- Early Childhood and Class Teachers make home visits to build a rapport with families and to begin to understand each family's culture and environment.
- A formal, informative handover is conducted from the Early Childhood teacher to the Class One Teacher of each individual child to ensure continuity of understanding of each child's development and individual needs.
- Class Teachers hold regular face-to-face interviews with the parents, ensuring that their overview of the child's home and school life evolves with the child.

Class Teacher, Class Fabric and Culture

- Friendship, respectful relationships and peer support between students are reinforced to ensure a sense of belonging.
- The Class Teacher guides the educational journey of the children from Class One to Class Eight. There are many benefits to this model, not least that it helps the children to feel understood, safe and secure, and allows the teacher to be sensitive to any changes and influences in the child's wellbeing.
- In particular, Class Teachers ongoing connection to their class of children allows them to observe physical, emotional or educational changes that are not in line with a child's normal state of being or with expected healthy developmental changes.
- A student-class relationship is built up year after year in which a deep care, understanding, trust and acknowledgement of the other is nurtured. This enables all children to feel they have trusted peers and feel safe in communicating thoughts, opinions, and concerns.
- A teacher-class relationship enables the children to feel comfortable within the social fabric of the class to voice their thoughts, opinions and concerns.

- A parent-teacher relationship is built up through regular class meetings, face-to-face interviews, class celebrations and festivals, enabling open understanding and communication.
- A class community-teacher relationship develops in which the class teacher guides, advises and shapes the culture of the class.
- MRSS sees all of these relationships as providing a solid foundation for the children's wellbeing and safety, and, looking further forward, for their confidence, and trust in themselves when they enter the wider world as free human beings.

Teaching Children through Imitation, Rhythm and the Senses (Early Childhood/Primary age appropriate)

Story, movement, imitation, role play, verse and song are purposeful activities that can be employed to empower a child's sense of self and others, engender a reverence for the world and encourage healthy social conduct.

Teachers may choose a story, song verse or activity to guide the children's thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Examples may be:

- Look at what our hands can do..... Sowing the seeds, collecting the eggs, chopping the wood, stirring the pot, kneading the dough, hammering the nails.
- Helpers, sweeping the path, setting the table, collecting the cups, placing gumboots neatly, sawing wood for the fire, giving animal's fresh straw and water.
- A story using archetypes of behaviour and soul qualities may be appropriate: for example, a child speaking out about what is right even if they face the wrath of the witch etc.
- A verse spoken by the class each day: for example: Brave and True I will be, each good deed sets me free, I will fight for the right I will conquer the wrong. This may help a child to build courage and speak the truth.
- Encourage the child to use their words over their limbs: for example, say, "Stop doing that" rather than hitting the other child back.
- The class culture is established from early childhood. The daily rhythms and routines aim to provide a harmonious way for the day to unfold. Alternating activities and rhythms helps to hold a child's behaviour. This can highlight when a child is "out of sorts". If we observe a change in behaviour, we may ask the parents directly whether anything is happening in the home.
- Speaking in plays, weekly birthday verse and role play encourage children to feel comfortable speaking, using their voice.

Teaching through Direct Instruction

- Children receive both explicit and implicit education regarding consent to touch their physical body, using language such as "STOP" means to stop the physical contact. Other phrases may include "Kind hands, kind words, kind deeds", and "Private parts are private" (early childhood/early primary).

- Class teachers speak directly to the class and/or individuals in matters pertaining to physical wellbeing and privacy.

Rapport with other school staff

- Children are introduced to a number of trusted adults with whom they can share concerns regarding their physical and/or sexual body from the beginning of their schooling. These adults include the First Aid/ Office staff, as well as their various subject teachers.
- Class teachers hold class information evenings every term in which parents can have discussions around child safety matters.

Physical Space

- The physical spaces of the school contribute to prevention of sexual abuse. Classrooms have a high level of visibility due to the number of windows and glazed doors. Separate toilet blocks are allocated for use by students of similar ages. The children are told that going to the toilet is for that purpose only; they are not to gather or loiter in toilet areas.
- Risk assessments of class rooms, playgrounds and storage areas are conducted frequently.
- Risk assessments of proposed and new activities inside and outside the school are conducted.

Secondary School

Healthy Relationships Program

MRSS secondary school runs a specific program for class seven to class 12 students. This is run by a member of the Child safety group. This program focuses on Healthy Relationships and is tailored to meet the needs of age appropriate content related to all relationships, meeting the developmental stage of the students. The program is taught annually and is based around 8 key concepts. Key concept number two incorporates child safety and is a conversation and discussion where students can also bring feedback, questions and concerns. The students are also introduced to Damian Stone who is the secondary student welfare person and Child Safety program coordinator. There are age appropriate sexual abuse prevention resources available to all students, depending on the topic and age of the student. In which is explained throughout these sessions.

1. Relationships
2. Values, Rights (Child safety), Culture and Sexuality
3. Understanding Gender
4. Violence and Staying Safe
5. Skills for Health and Well-being
6. The Human Body and Development
7. Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour
 - Level appropriate:
 - Sexual Anatomy and Physiology
 - Same Sex Attraction
 - Pornography Safety
 - Social Media and Sex
 - Sexual Expression and Pleasure
 - Sexual decision making and consent

- Gender Based violence and rigid stereotypes
8. Sexual and Reproductive Health

Educating, Empowering and Communicating, Child Safety with families, classes and community

To support child safety and wellbeing we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities. To support family engagement, at MRSS we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We communicate, educate and share our child safety and wellbeing policy with, and in a variety of ways:

- Child Safety policy on website;
- Child Safety policy in newsletter from time to time;
- Child Safety in enrolment agreement, in our parent responsibilities;
- Child Safety published in parent handbook;
- Child Safety discussions at class parent meetings occasionally;
- Child Safety discussions about healthy relationships, coordinator invitation to classes
- Offering families and school community members from time to time a formal invitation to review policy and offer any feedback or discussion. This invitation will either be advertised in the school newsletter or held as a parent discussion; and
- Healthy Relationship Program to offer time for secondary student feedback and discussion on child safety and will either be advertised in the school newsletter or held as a parent discussion.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

“Steiner education is a world movement which promotes a spirit of universal endeavour and cooperation among all nations, cultures and identity groups. The schools strive to develop each individual’s potential as a resilient, ethical human being who cares for the environment and has reverence for all life. Students learn from life and are enabled to contribute towards a world ethos upholding cultural diversity, equality of rights and economic sustainability.” Core Principal #2 of Steiner Education Australia

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School's intention is for the growing child to be nurtured in an environment where they can flourish and grow into their best self in which they carry within themselves and out into the world. For a child to flourish they must be in an environment where their individual self feels valued, cared for, nourished and engaged. Every child is individual and brings with them their home life experiences and culture, we celebrate this diversity within our school and our community free from any form of discrimination. We understand that not every individual's journey in life is the same and there are children who may be more vulnerable and may need additional support. We ensure equity amongst all students. Throughout our child safe policy we have noted that we pay particular attention to the welfare of the children who may be from more vulnerable minority groups such as indigenous Australians, children from culturally and linguistically diverse cultures, international students, students without a home, students with disabilities and gender diverse students. The school has a Student Welfare coordinator who can assist and provide support, referrals and resources for any student in need. MRSS offers a curative Eurythmy program for individual support of students when required. In addition a group of Support Education specialists work with individual and smaller groups of children who may need tailored support.

At MRSS we aim to meet the child or student in love and reverence. Our aim is to understand each and every child and celebrate each child as an individual human being on this earth. Our school ethos extends beyond the classroom and into our community. MRSS offers a curriculum that celebrates a broad range of cultural festivals, and is a curriculum rich and diverse in cultural stories from indigenous Australia and all over the world. Our curriculum follows epochs in history to help give a full picture of humanity. This helps us to celebrate our differences, similarities and gifts that we bring as an individual. MRSS offers a comprehensive language program where children learn two foreign languages from class one onwards. A Student Exchange Program is offered that gives opportunity for students to be embedded in other cultures and languages and for MRSS to host students from other cultures.

MRSS becomes a double stream school in high school offering a new and diverse group of students. The students are welcomed into their class either upper or lower and have two class guardians which are often one of their subject teachers. This group of children and guardians travel through the high school years from class 7-12. The relationship that grows and is fostered is very supportive for the students. The students begin and end their day with the guardians. This gives the children a supportive foundation for their entire secondary school experience and an opportunity for the guardians to really know the children and support the individual and the group welfare of their class. This also gives the guardians an opportunity to build relationships with the parent/guardian of the students and becomes another supportive framework for the child.

We also believe that for the students the school environment and its culture to thrive, MRSS needs to be able to support staff, volunteers, and the broader school community in understanding of children with diverse needs. MRSS contributes to education for staff through weekly professional development topics. Weekly child study, weekly child remedial meetings, online development through SEA and Anthroposophical initiatives and staff curriculum days. The school also embraces their staff in the daily running and activities of the school. MRSS has a daily meditation at the beginning of the day and has informal study groups and initiatives for those inclined or with interest in certain topics of self - development and meditation. MRSS supports an inclusive community culture prompting equity and diversity through the celebration of cultural festivals, parent evenings and community events open to the school and broader community and a sharing of the student's artistic work, plays and events i.e. Open day

MRSS also embraces the principals of equity and diversity throughout the governance framework and this includes;;

- MRSS Schools core principals, ethos and philosophy;
- MRSS ideals of school Governance and the College of Teachers;
- Dining Room as a shared space between students and teachers;
- MRSS policies and procedures upholding and embedding principals of equity within them, including, student enrolment process, staff employment processes, codes of conduct, anti-bullying, behaviour management;
- MRSS student inclusion program; and
- Student Welfare program.

12. STAFF SELECTION GUIDELINES

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be a primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

In accordance with Ministerial Order 1359 “Child Safe Standard 6: Staff Selection”, Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School endeavours to ensure that the selection process for recruitment of new staff and volunteers is rigorous in regard to an applicant’s suitability to undertake child-connected work. This procedure outlines the steps involved in the recruitment process to meet this aim, while ensuring natural justice for all applicants seeking employment or voluntary work at the School.

PROCEDURES

Position Descriptions

As each employment vacancy arises, the position description will be prepared by the faculty group and must include the statement “*Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children and young people including those with a disability, indigenous Australians, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, gender diverse and international students and children unable to live at home. This will be a primary focus of our care and decision-making. Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has zero tolerance for child abuse.*” The position description will be reviewed by the Administration Group as part of the preparation of the job advertisement. Details of essential and/or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes will be included, and these will also be considered in relation to child safety. Applicants will also be invited to elaborate on experience they may have had working with children with a disability or with children of diverse cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds, indigenous Australian and gender diverse students Applicants may be asked how they could support these minority groups to feel engaged, empowered and culturally safe. Position descriptions will be available to all applicants, both electronically via the website and in hard copy by request.

Shortlisting of Applicants

Shortlisted applicants will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the position description and that they have read and understand the Child Safety Program and Code of Conduct of the School. Background searches will be undertaken with due diligence prior to shortlisting. Applicants will be asked to provide the contact details of at least two referees, of whom one must be a current or most recent employer and the other a direct supervisor/manager.

Interview Process

Interviewees will be advised that the selection process will involve a rigorous background check. Proof of current Victorian Institution of Teaching (VIT) registration or a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) will be required as part of the process, as well as proof of qualifications, including original transcripts, and registrations, as appropriate. The interview group will emphasize that all staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of all children in their care at all times. Any apparent gaps in the employment history of an interviewee will be thoroughly investigated.

Reference Checks

Reference checks will include:

- Speaking by telephone with at least two of the referees provided by the applicant including a current or most recent employer and a direct supervisor/manager from a previous role;
- Confirmation that previous employment details provided by the interviewee are accurate and the name and position of the referee;
- Questions regarding any direct supervision of children by the interviewee in their current or previous employment;
- Questions regarding the applicant's strengths and weaknesses;
- Specific questions about the position, role and duties of the applicant;
- Asking each referee if they would employ the interviewee again; and
- Asking each referee if "with respect to Child Safety do you have any concerns about the individual that would affect our decision to employ?"
- Shortlisted applicants are required to submit two forms of personal identification, and the Occupational Health and Safety Officer will ensure that names and addresses are the same as those provided by the applicant.

Interviews

The interview process is a very important step in selecting the right person for Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School and in identifying any people who may pose a risk to students in our care. The interview process should include sufficient time to plan and prepare for the interview, forming the panel with the right mix of staff experience and skills to carry out the interview, ensuring that all panel members are clear on what the position requires.

An open-ended style of behavioural-based questioning should enable the interviewers to assess the applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries and accountability. Answers

should be recorded by each member of the panel for future discussion and filed for future reference. Although the interview should be free and responsive, questions should be substantially common to each of the interviews for the same position.

Some useful questions may include:

'Tell us about why you want to work with children?'

'Describe a time when you had to manage a child whose behaviour or attitude you found challenging?'

'Tell us about a time when you had to comfort a distressed child?'

Source: dhs.vic.gov.au

Staff are encouraged to take notice of their own thoughts and feelings when interacting with the applicant. Ask for more information if the applicant does not provide sufficient information in his or her responses. While interviews should be approached in a positive and not interrogatory way, the panel should be aware of and attentive to warning signs, such as:

- Unexplained lengthy gaps in employment history;
- The applicant says they do not value or 'need' supervision; or
- The applicant is evasive or inconsistent in his or her answers.

Source: dhs.vic.gov.au

An interview should be a frank and forthright exchange between the applicant and the panel. The panel members should then be capable, individually and collectively of making good judgements about the exchange. When these judgements are supported by due diligence, as described in these guidelines, then the selection process should serve the School and the safety and educational needs of the students very well.

Employment Contract

Each letter of offer and letter of acceptance contains the statement emphasizing zero tolerance (in italics at the beginning of these guidelines). New staff sign the letter of acceptance to acknowledge their acceptance of the position and the expectations of the School, in particular, in relation to child safety. This includes a six-month review by the Administration Group of the College of Teachers, on all aspects of their role, of which the candidate will be advised. The review should, where possible, be performed by the mentor appointed by the College of Teachers. A record of this review will be added to the individual staff member's file. During the first six months of employment, consideration should be given to whether the person should receive closer supervision, support or guidance and whether the person should be required to undertake further training during or after the review period.

New Staff Induction

The College of Teachers will appoint an appropriately experienced staff member working in their area of the School, to introduce new staff to all aspects and expectations of the School. This includes directing

them to the MRSS Staff Handbook, which will be emailed to them as part of their induction package. The Staff Handbook is an important source of information about what is required of all staff, providing a thorough understanding of policies and procedures, including child safe standards. All staff will continue to be supported in their role in ensuring Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School continues to maintain a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse.

As part of their induction package new staff will be provided with a contract to sign and return, prior to beginning work. This contract, as well as describing the legal and financial relationship between the staff member and the School also includes a provision where the staff member signs onto the full extent of their responsibilities in the Child Safety program. All staff members who work with students will be required to undertake all child safety training (either in house training or online module) which must be completed within 8 weeks of commencing their new position. All staff are to sign the child safety attestation which acknowledges they have read and understood the child safety policy.

Volunteers

Refer to the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct. Proof of current Working With Children Check (WWCC) certification is required and a check list must be signed and submitted to acknowledge that the Child Protection Policy has been read and understood. Volunteers receive an induction upon beginning at the School appropriate to their role. WWCC, checklist signoff and induction oversight is the responsibility of the Occupational Health and Safety Officer and is overseen by the Child Safety Coordinators.

Guidelines prepared by Art Curl 16th May 2017

Reviewed by:	Date;	Next review:
<i>Damian Stone</i>		
<i>Jessica Moyes</i>	<i>July 2022</i>	<i>2024</i>

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

MRSS is a member of the ESMART school program. The school is currently working through the compliance components to meet full accreditation.

Date: July 2022

By: Josie Phillips

Review Date: July 2024

1. PURPOSE

- To clearly state the schools pedagogical beliefs surrounding the impact that media and technology has on child development.
- To create clear guidelines for educators on how to include technology within the curriculum in an age appropriate and meaningful way - A Media Policy that Grows with Your Children.
- To provide parents with a clear understanding on the school's approach to media and how it unfolds in the curriculum.
- Creating clear guidelines for how they can support the school curriculum at home and in turn help to maintain a Media-free environment for the young children at the school.
- To ensure that all MRSS students who engage in an online environment either with other people or content, are educated in online safety and are well equipped to identify and or report any inappropriate content or behavior.
- To ensure all MRSS students who use technology are able to be critically aware of the impact on using a device and the impacts it can have on individuals, social community life and health.
- To ensure that all MRSS students are aware of the schools online code of conduct.

2. NATIONAL STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

- National Law Section 323 approved learning framework
- National Regulations: 73, 75- 76,
- National Regulations: 168 (2) (K)
- National Quality Area: 3.1.3
- National Quality Area: 3.2.1
- National Quality Area: 5.1.1

- National Quality Area: 5.1.2

3. SCHOOL'S PEDAGOGICAL BELIEF

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is dedicated to nurturing each child's capacity for creative imagination, independent thinking, and positive action. The school's efforts to foster students' healthy emotional development and meaningful relationships with their environment can be undermined by those encounters with media, which separate children from authentic experience and promote a distorted, developmentally inappropriate and consumerist view of the world. It is therefore the school policy to introduce students to age appropriate and guided instruction where electronic media is concerned.

Students learn best to use electronic media as a resource and tool in upper high school when these media are introduced after children have developed a rich experiential foundation. Media thus becomes a supplement to, not a substitute for, the richness of direct experience.

Acknowledging that computers are an integral part of contemporary life, we recognise the importance and value of providing the best, most relevant, up-to-date educative processes available in this arena.

In all areas of study MRSS staff strive to cultivate literacy, problem solving and the formation of judgment and creativity in our students. This also applies to any applications using electronic media.

We encourage students to view computers as a springboard or aide to broaden their learning.

A computer and the information gained through this media should be viewed as not simply an authoritative electronic source, but something to be questioned, analysed and utilized. Our intent is to provide students with a multi-layered education which enhances their ability to meet and use the latest technology – whilst encouraging and developing their individual capacity for analytic, critical reflection.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF ICT WITHIN THE STEINER CURRICULUM

Refer to Appendix A (scope and sequence of ICT from Steiner National Curriculum)

Technology in the Early Years

Steiner School has a strong emphasis on Technology, starting in the younger years with wood, food and craft technologies, and using a wide variety of tools. As the children progress through the Primary years, they learn about the evolution of technology.

Technology in the Primary Years

Continuing with the theme of Technology as an evolution in time, the primary years continue on with wood, food and craft technologies. Building technologies including mud brick making and building, metalwork and woodwork are introduced. Access to computers at this level is not part of the school curriculum or philosophy.

Technology in the High School

Teachers may use technology to better enhance the learning of students in years 7 to 8 via occasional audio-visual methods where appropriate, but access to information resources is restricted to library computers and then only via librarians, and is not available unless specifically allowed by class teachers. In years 7 and 8 students study simple machines and the gradual move to the industrial society.

In Years 9 and 10 students experience dedicated IT classes where they are taught basic keyboard skills, word processing, programming, spread sheets, robotics, data bases, presentation programmes, and simple graphic manipulation. Most students will already be familiar with email and internet access, so there is an emphasis on the social and cultural aspects, how to select information and use it fruitfully, safe practices and online code of conduct and copyright issues. This also includes the legal and social implications of information shared on social media and cyber bullying.

5. IMPLEMENTING THE MEDIA POLICY AT SCHOOL

MRSS has an independent mobile phones policy that includes hand held electronic devices, tablets, ear buds and smart watches.

In school, mobile phones will be collected at the beginning of the day, stored in a secure environment, and returned at the end of the day.

Staff will be advised of the ICT curriculum and online safety practices as part of regular Year level and College meetings.

Guardians and class teachers will be assisted by peers, with concerns regards any online issues with students as a regular part of their professional role in duty of care and the schools child safety program.

As part of the information to parents, class meetings with Guardians will afford opportunities to

reinforce school policies and practices and code of conduct in terms of the online environment and their children.

MRSS school newsletter articles are another means of communicating, updating and educating parents and staff.

The Parent Handbook, Staff handbook and the school website publish information around IT and media use including the IT and Media policies.

The media and technology policy and code of conduct is reviewed at a minimum every two years.

6. IMPLEMENTING THE MEDIA POLICY AT HOME/OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

It is essential to the successful implementation of the media policy that parents are provided with information about the use of electronic media within the curriculum, and strategies to help them with age-appropriate uses of electronic media outside the school environment.

MRSS has policies and rules around the use of mobile phones, media and technology and provides information at class and parent evenings where IT topics and online safety are covered and resources provided.

The IT department issues students with their own school email address from year 9 onwards which helps to support them and mitigate the risk of exposure to inappropriate information or content whilst supporting the students right to privacy, access to information and learning opportunities.

7. ICT CURRICULUM

Early Childhood and Primary School

Our school recommends that all children from birth until 12 years are not overly exposed to media in their daily lives particularly in an unguided manner.

Parents are advised that students of this age should not watch television or movies unsupervised, or use game playing devices, mobile phones or computers. Additionally, parents are advised to consider their children's exposure to radio and recorded music.

Years 7 and 8

The media policy in the High School recognizes that it is appropriate for 13 to 19-year-olds to learn to critically approach and effectively use media. However, at year 7 and 8 this does not include the use of "Bring your own devices" (BYOD) of any kind as part of the daily curriculum.

On rare occasions, students at this level can access the two computers in the library for guided research (via school librarians and under their supervision), and only with a class teacher's permission.

Year 9 and 10

In years 9 and 10, students have access to computers via a year-long targeted program encouraging creativity and skilled use of the available software in a dedicated computer laboratory.

At this level students are issued with their own school login and computers are situated so they can be consistently monitored regarding appropriate use in class.

Numerous social media and gaming websites are blocked in line with a general duty of care policy and Child safety policy. These policies are explained to both students and parents, and constant monitoring and updating of the same by the IT department is standard practice. The IT department issues students with their own school email address which helps filter inappropriate content through the schools safety filter programs.

Students begin both years with a review of their own knowledge of the online environment, their level of experience at home and also via mobile phone. Particular attention is paid to the legalities and dangers of the online environment in the form of targeted discussions and written research assignments. This supports our child safety program and implementation of our policies to keep our children educated in being in and using an online environment.

Students' ICT experiences in class include programming, astute and innovative use of Microsoft Office and similar products. It also includes Robotics, Stop Motion and other technologies, skilling them to appropriately master tasks suitable for their more senior years of High School and the workplace.

Year 11 and 12

In Year 11 and 12 students are able to bring their own devices to school, and utilize them as

directed by their subject teachers to enhance their studies. Year level meetings will also reinforce the school policies and good practice guidelines for these student as individual logins on their devices also enables access from home to school programs such as Edrollo and other revision sites for their VCE studies.

Mobile Phone use in the High School:

Mobile phones are collected at the beginning of the day and stored in a locked box within each classroom to be returned at the end of the school day. This Mobile Phone practice is continued through Years 7 to 10. In VCE years 11 and 12 the practice is for students to keep phones in lockers until after school hours and not use them on campus unless with express permission of the VCE teachers. The mobile phone and computer use policy is conveyed to parents via the regular Year group parent meetings and as necessary in private parent teacher meetings when concerns are raised. (Refer to the School's Mobile Phone Policy).

Third Party Providers

MRSS requests that if there is any requirement for a student to be in an online environment with a third party provider that the provider provides MRSS with their online code of conduct and child safety online policy.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School High School E Safety Code of Conduct

At Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School we support the right of all members of the school community to access safe and inclusive learning environments, including digital and online spaces. This form outlines the School's roles and responsibilities in supporting safe digital learning, as well as the expected behaviors we have of our students when using digital or online spaces.

At our School we:

- Have a Student Code of Conduct, Mobile Phone policy, Behavior Management Policy and Child Safety Program that outlines our School's values and expected standards of student conduct, including consequences for breaching the standards. This Policy extends to online conduct;
- Have programs in place to educate our students to be critical thinkers and become safe and responsible users of digital technologies;
- Provide information about digital access issues such as online privacy, intellectual property and online safety , code of conduct and copyright;
- Supervise and support students using digital technologies for school-directed learning;

Use clear protocols and procedures to protect students working in online spaces. This includes:

- Reviewing the safety and appropriateness of online tools and communities, removing offensive content at earliest opportunity, and other measures;
 - Provide a filtered internet service to block inappropriate content. We acknowledge, however, that full protection from inappropriate content cannot be guaranteed
 - Use online sites and digital tools that support students' learning;
 - Address issues or incidents that have the potential to impact on the wellbeing of our students;
 - Refer suspected illegal online acts to the relevant Law Enforcement authority for investigation;
- Support parents and caregivers to understand safe and responsible use of digital technologies and the strategies that can be implemented at home. The following resources provide current information from both the Department of Education & Training and The Children's eSafety Commission:
Bullystoppers Parent Interactive Learning Modules
(www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/parentmodules.aspx)
iParent | Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner

STUDENT DECLARATION

When I use digital technologies and the internet, I agree to be a safe, responsible and ethical user at all times by:

- Respecting others and communicating with them in a supportive manner;
- Never participating in online bullying (e.g. forwarding messages and supporting others in harmful, inappropriate or hurtful online behaviours);
- Protecting my privacy by not giving out personal details, including my full name, telephone number, address, passwords and images;
- Protecting the privacy of others by never posting or forwarding their personal details or images without their consent;
- Only taking and sharing photographs or sound or video recordings when others are aware the recording is taking place and have provided their explicit consent as part of an approved lesson;
- Talking to a teacher or a trusted adult if I personally feel uncomfortable or unsafe online, or if I see others participating in unsafe, inappropriate or hurtful online behavior;
- Thinking carefully about the content I upload or post online, knowing that this is a personal reflection of who I am and can influence what people think of me;
- Protecting the privacy and security of my school community by not sharing or posting the

link to a video conferencing meeting with others, offline in public communications or online on public websites or social media forums;

- Reviewing the terms and conditions of use for any digital or online tool (e.g. age restrictions, parental consent requirements), and if my understanding is unclear seeking further explanation from a trusted adult;
- Meeting the stated terms and conditions for any digital or online tool, and completing the required registration processes;
- Handling ICT devices with care and notifying a teacher of any damage or attention required;
- Abiding by copyright and intellectual property regulations by requesting permission to use images, text, audio and video, and attributing references appropriately;
- Not accessing media that falls outside the School's policies;
- Not downloading unauthorised programs, including games;
- Not interfering with network systems and security or the data of another user;
- Not attempting to log into the network or online service with a username or password of another person.

Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____

For more information on privacy settings see the address for [eSafety Guide](#) below.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/covid-19-online-safety-kit-for-parents-and-carers>

13. CHILD SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Staff Member(s) Responsible:	Art Curl and Damian Stone
Date last Reviewed:	July 2022 Damian Stone, Jessica Moyes
Next Major Review:	July 2024

Purpose

To acknowledge, seek and identify Child Safety Risks within our School and to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure child safety in our School, in keeping with our School Commitment.

School Commitment

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be a primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner 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 is paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, gender diverse children, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Melbourne Rudolf Steiner 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.

Child Protection Risk Management

The School has adopted a risk management approach to child protection by developing and implementing strategies to identify and mitigate our child safety risks based on:

- the unique nature of our School;
- the activities students undertake at the School, including the provision of services by contractors (including Extra Lesson, After School Care and instruction provided by others while students are on camp) in or outside the School's Campus;
- physical and online environments that exist at the School; and
- Responding specifically to the characteristics and needs of all of our students.

PROCEDURE

Risk Management Strategies

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has implemented the following risk mitigation strategies to ensure that the School maintains a proactive approach to our duty of care in protecting children from harm and complies with our legal and regulatory obligations:

- this Child Safety Program, including our Child Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- a system, managed by the Child Safety Officers, through which risks of child abuse, and actions taken to reduce or remove these risks are planned and recorded. The system is also used to monitor actions and to evaluate their overall effectiveness on a regular basis;
- that the Program and policies are implemented through training school staff, distributed to all staff electronically on an annual basis and notified and made available to all members of the school community and the public;
- induction and ongoing training provided to staff annually, about identifying risks of child abuse in the school environment, their obligations and responsibilities for managing these risks, how to report and respond to child protection incidents, and the School's current child safety standards;
- policies and procedures relating to excursions and camps ensuring that child protection risks in these environments are identified and managed;
- ongoing, periodic reviews of all physical school environments to eliminate physical isolation risks, such as solid classroom doors or rooms with no windows, or implement procedural controls where elimination is not possible; and
- specific procedures for verifying the Working with Children Check status of all staff/visitors, who may have direct, unsupervised contact with students, to ensure that students remain safe in all School environments both on and off the School grounds.

Risk Analysis Tools

Consequence Criteria

Consequence descriptor	Wellbeing and Safety Consequence Description
Insignificant	Minor incident requiring First Aid only or peer support for stress/trauma event
Minor	Incident requiring First Aid only or peer support for stress/trauma event
Moderate	Incident requiring medical attention or professional support for stress/trauma event
Major	Incident requiring hospital admission or ongoing clinical support for stress/trauma event. Possible permanent disability/impact
Severe	Incident resulting in fatality or permanent disability or requiring extensive clinical support for a long duration and/or multiple individuals for stress/trauma event

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/riskprocess.aspx>

Likelihood Criteria

Likelihood	Description	Indicative Frequency
Almost certain (>95%)	Expected to occur	Prone to occur regularly Is anticipated for each repetition of the event or activity
Likely (66-95%)	Probably will occur ("No surprise")	May be anticipated multiple times in the review period (3 years) May occur once every few repetitions of the activity or event
Possible (26-65%)	May occur at some stage	May occur several times across Victoria in the review period
Unlikely (5-25%)	Would be surprising if it occurred	May occur somewhere in Victoria in the review period
Rare (<5%)	May never occur	May occur somewhere, sometime in the next ten years

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/riskprocess.aspx> 9/2/18

NB. Both likelihood and frequency are both context specific and dynamic, so, while these matrices promote valuable discussion and planning, they are an aid to consideration, rather than a substitute for careful, informed thought by experienced, capable staff within the School.

Risk Rating Matrix

		Consequence				
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
L i k e l i h o o d	Almost certain	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

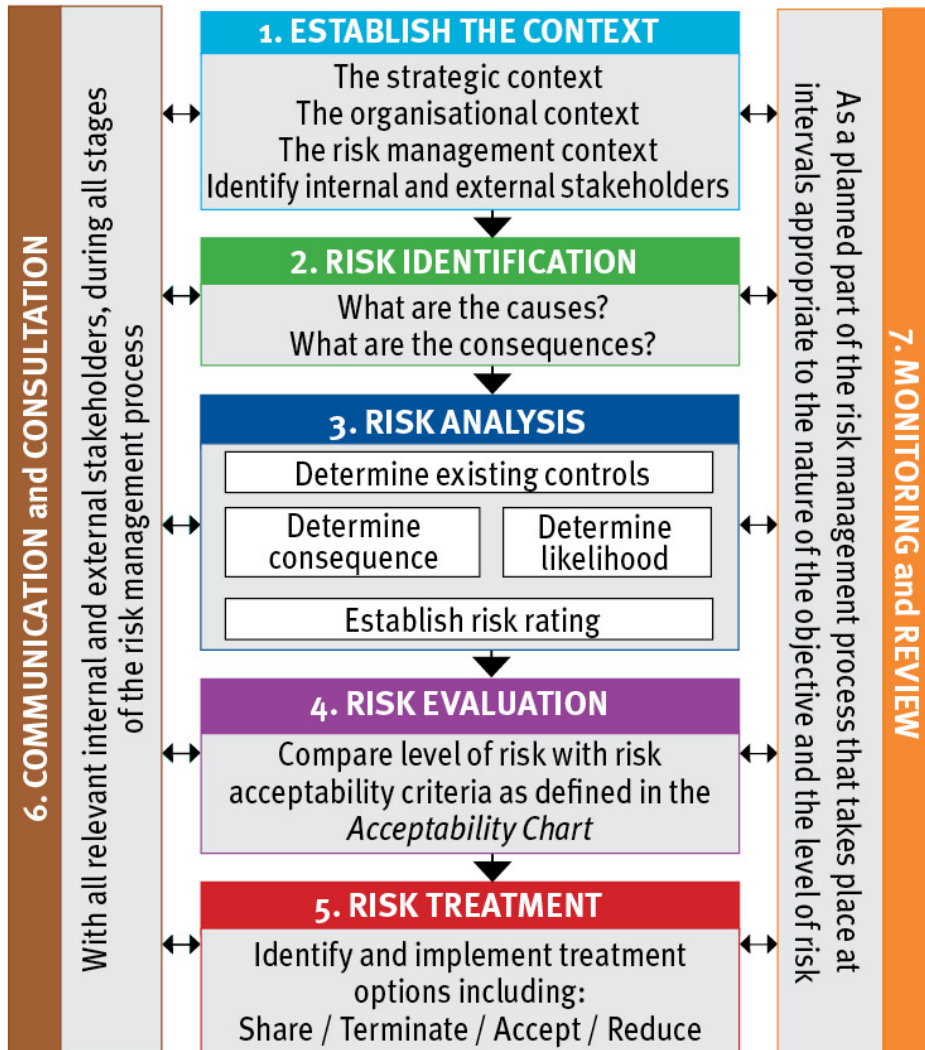
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/riskprocess.aspx> 9/2/18

Risk Acceptability Chart

<i>Extreme = Unacceptable without explicit oversight by the College of Teachers</i>	Immediately consider whether this activity should cease. Any decision to continue exposure to this level of risk would be made at Executive Officer level, would be subject to comprehensive analysis to generate a detailed risk treatment plan and be the subject of on-going oversight and high level review.
<i>High = Acceptable with ongoing continual management review by Child Safety Coordinators</i>	Consider whether this activity should continue. This decision would normally be made at senior levels, would be based on detailed analysis to generate a risk treatment plan and be subject to on-going review to ensure treatments remain effective and the benefits balance the risk.
<i>Medium = Acceptable with frequent review by Child Safety Coordinators</i>	Exposure to the risk may continue provided it has been appropriately assessed, has been mitigated to As Low As Reasonably Practical (ALARP) and is subject to frequent review to ensure the risk analysis and treatment remain valid. Permanent/long term actions to reduce the risk should be considered.
<i>Low = Acceptable with scheduled periodic review</i>	Exposure to this risk is acceptable but is subject to periodic review to ensure the risk does not increase and evolving treatment(s) or accepted standards do not vary.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/riskprocess.aspx> 9/2/18

DET Risk Process



- Process based on ISO 31000: 2009
- Risk can be described as anything; event, practice, process, activity, etc. that could hinder or help achievement of stated goals or objectives

14. RISK INDICATORS FOR CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Definitions

Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined in Section 3 of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) as including:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or a grooming offence listed in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic);
- the infliction of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- the serious neglect of a child.

Family Violence

Whilst the term “family violence” does not form part of the official definition of “child abuse”, the impact of family violence on a child is commonly referred to as a form of child abuse.

In Victoria section 5 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) defines “family violence” as behaviour by a person towards a family member that is:

- physically or sexually abusive;
- emotionally or psychologically abusive;
- economically abusive;
- threatening;
- coercive; or
- in any other way controlling or dominating the family member and causes them to feel fear for their own, or other family member’s safety or wellbeing.

Behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or be exposed to the effects of such behaviour also falls within the definition of “family violence”.

Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse can be divided into four categories:

- Physical;
- Sexual;
- Emotional; and
- Neglect.

Examples of forms of abuse and indicators for neglect

It is important to be aware that the presence of an indicator of harm doesn’t necessarily mean that a child is being abused. Conversely, the absence of indicators doesn’t necessarily mean that the child is not being abused. What follows is not an exhaustive list.

Physical Abuse

This consists of any serious non-accidental form of injury or harm inflicted on a child. It includes beating, shaking, burning and assault with weapons. Children who are physically harmed may have frequent injuries explained as accidental.

Physical Indicators:

- Bruises or welts, often of different ages;
- Burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts;
- Bald patches where hair has been pulled out;
- Lacerations or abrasions; or
- Poisoning.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Child wears inappropriate clothing in attempt to cover injuries;
- Extreme wariness of adult contact;
- Apprehensive when other children cry or shout;
- Behavioural extremes, such as aggressiveness/withdrawal;
- Fear of parents / caregiver, reluctance to go home;
- Poor sleeping patterns, fear of dark, nightmares;
- Reports injury by parents or gives inappropriate explanation of injury;
- Attaches too readily to strangers;
- Frequent absenteeism/prolonged school refusal;
- Aggressive behaviour towards others; or
- Drug or alcohol abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when someone (adult, adolescent or another child) uses their power, force or authority to involve a child/children in sexual activity. It can take the form of contact or non-contact acts such as exposure to pornography, on-line grooming etc.

Sexual abuse is not usually identified through obvious physical indicators. The presence of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge, or frequent urinary tract infections can indicate sexual abuse.

In older children and young people, sexual harm is more likely to be identified through self-disclosure by the child to a trusted person, rather than by observing physical indicators. In babies and young children, the physical indicators are observed through a medical examination.

Behavioural Indicators

- Reports of sexual harm by caregiver;
- A fear of home, specific place, particular adult;
- Constant complaint of headaches, abdominal pains;
- Reluctance to participate in physical or recreational activities;
- Sophisticated sexual knowledge beyond what is expected for age and environment;
- Unusual level of interest in own or other's genitals, taking into consideration their age and circumstances;
- Personality change;
- Serious difficulties with peers, adults;
- Regression in toilet training, for example: soiling, wetting;
- Excessive concerns about privacy;
- Refusal to go home or truancy;
- Self-destructive behaviour; or
- Wearing of provocative clothing or layers of clothing to hide injuries.

Emotional Harm

Emotional harm occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or subjected to threats, hostility or persistent coldness. If a young person grows up in this climate, they can develop a negative self-image that impedes development and prevents them from reaching full potential. They may develop personality or behavioural disorders, or become an adult filled with self-doubt and internalized rage, unable to form sustained and intimate relationships.

Physical indicators

There are few physical indicators of emotional harm.

- Speech disorders; or
- Delays in physical, emotional or mental development.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Behavioural extremes which cannot be explained by other circumstances
- Extremely low self-esteem
- Compliant, passive, withdrawn, tearful, apathetic
- Aggressive, demanding
- Depression
- Constant high anxiety
- Poor social and interpersonal skills
- Delayed development, for example in speech
- Persistent habit disorders, such as sucking, biting, washing, rocking

- Unexplained academic delays

Neglect

Neglect includes all instances where a caregiver has failed to take adequate precautions to ensure the child's safety and provide food, clothing and shelter for the child. Many cases of neglect require a welfare and family support response, rather than a protective response. However, in cases where neglect has resulted in physical injury, emotional harm or health impairment, it may be considered as abuse.

Physical Indicators:

- Consistent hunger
- Failure to thrive or malnutrition
- Poor hygiene that can result in health problems and/or ostracism by peers
- Inappropriate dress for the climatic conditions
- Consistently without adequate supervision and at risk of injury or harm
- Unattended health problems or medical needs
- Abandonment
- Health or dietary practice which endangers a child's health or development

Behavioural Indicators:

- Stealing food
- Extended stays at school
- Constant fatigue, listlessness, or falling asleep in class
- Delinquent acts: vandalism, alcohol or drug abuse
- Little positive interaction with parent/caregiver
- Prolonged absenteeism or school refusal
- Aggressive or inappropriate behaviour
- Isolation from their peer group

15. FINAL RISK ASSESSMENT

See next page.

RISK ASSESSMENT CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS

Risk Event or environment	Existing risk management and/or controls	Likelihood of being an issue	Consequences	Risk rating	New management strategies	Responsibility	Risk rating after new strategies
Organisational culture around child safety standards	Child safety Policy and program, Child Safety Code of Conduct	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Training, discussions, examination by individual staff about their roles and all aspects regarding child safety, clearly allocated responsibilities for culture change (child safety group and all staff generally), implementation and review of new safety standards (2022)	Initiated by Child safety coordinators and carried by the College of Teachers. Reviewed by Child safety Coordinators and reported to The College of Teachers	Low
Needs of students with a disability, aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds	Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation, Child safety policy and program, Child Safety Code of Conduct	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Careful implementation of strategies for inclusion and understanding and meeting diverse needs, staff training, diverse enrolment strategies, Clearer expectation of staff responsibilities. Students with high care needs (disabilities) have an aid with them during 95% of their school day.	All Staff and College of Teachers	Medium
Inappropriate employment of staff	VIT Code of Conduct, Working with Children Check, interview with references	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Improved staff selection (greater levels of new staff training and induction (in all areas including child safety standards). Clear expectations about our school role in our children's education and safety, increased interview questions about child safety standards and reference to any previous incidents /warnings.	Initiated by Child safety office, OHS officer and carried by the College of Teachers	Medium
Staff engagement with children online	Clear guidance for staff about avoiding social media engagement with students, staff very likely to still need to send info through to students who aren't able to be on-campus (i.e. covid)	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Risk identification, College and secondary group discussion and reiteration of guidance for staff	College of Teachers and Child Safety Coordinators	Low

Risk Event or environment	Existing risk management and/or controls	Likelihood of being an issue	Consequences	Risk rating	New management strategies	Responsibility	Risk rating after new strategies
Sexual Assault	Child Safety Policy and Program, Child Safety Code of Conduct	Rare	Major	Medium	Improved staff selection, greater levels of new staff training and induction (in all areas including child safety standards). Clearer expectation of staff responsibilities. More conversation and discussions about the nature of the risk. Reporting protocol given to and signed off by individual staff. All staff given the critical action plan. clear processes for reporting made known to all members of the School community	All Staff and College of Teachers	Medium
Farm Area	Child safety code of conduct. Staff accompany primary classes to the farm	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Staff not to work in isolation with students. Encourage more engagement between other staff and the farm	Class teacher, farming teacher.	Low
Limited visibility of some building spaces and individual staff and student environments	Assessed level appropriateness of spaces used by staff in these situations and the code of conduct	Possible	Moderate	Low/Medium	Replace solid doors with glass panelled doors. All spaces used by students in the school checked and assessed for appropriateness. Staff trained to be aware of those environments and avoid prolonged time with students or alert other staff.	Child safety officers, OHS person, maintenance group and Chair of College and College of Teachers.	Low/Medium
Unknown people on school grounds	Awareness of all staff about their responsibility to check unknown persons on the school premises. Induction or accompaniment and sign in process at the school office for those people other than staff coming onto school grounds. Staff on yard duty and car park/driveway duty	Likely	Moderate	Medium	Clearer expectation of staff responsibilities. Students and parents educated on policy and practice of child safety. More conversation and discussions about the nature of the risk. Reporting protocol given to and signed off by individual staff. All staff given the critical action plan.	All school staff and the College of Teachers	Medium

Risk Event or environment	Existing risk management and/or controls	Likelihood of being an issue	Consequences	Risk rating	New management strategies	Responsibility	Risk rating after new strategies
Contractors on School Grounds	Child safe environments information and awareness for visitors, staff, and contractors required to be inducted process. Maintenance staff with contractor	Unlikely	Moderate	Low/Medium	Supervision, accompaniment and induction for all new contractors. Acknowledgement and encouragement of compliance by contractors	Occupational Health and Safety Officer and maintenance staff	Low
Areas of public access around school property	Nominated areas known and patrolled by staff as part of yard duty	Likely	Minor	Medium	More attention to specific yard duty areas. Areas allocated in the yard-duty roster and reviewed	All teaching and non-teaching staff members and the College of Teachers	Medium
Individual music lessons	All music staff have done either in school training or on-line mandatory reporting module.	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	All individual music rooms have clear glass doors and/or windows. There is a record of the days and times students are in music sessions. Only secondary students have lessons in the drum shed/band room and portables. Other music staff, students and maintenance staff moving around these building/rooms on a regular basis	Music teachers and College of teachers.	Medium
Work Experience	Staff visits and phone contact with work place staff, students and parents (if needed)	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Employers given Child Safety Code of Conduct and School Commitment Documents to read. Students given specific training/awareness in appropriate work place behaviours. Continued contact with students while on work experience and visiting staff ask to specifically observe work place and discuss with the student away from employer. Clear contact protocol established and given to students	Initiated by Child safety coordinator, work experience coordinator and visiting staff, and carried by the College of Teachers.	Medium

Risk Event or environment	Existing risk management and/or controls	Likelihood of being an issue	Consequences	Risk rating	New management strategies	Responsibility	Risk rating after new strategies
International exchange	Memorandum of Understanding with Exchange school. Police and/or WWC checks.	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Students are educated through our "Health Relationship education" which runs through the high school. We aim to support students to understand how to manage relationships safely and how to respond when they aren't able to do that (how to seek help and support). Provide Outgoing students with relevant country information, eg <i>Safe Book</i> from France. Emergency Management Plan. Providing emergency contact numbers for all countries they will travel through	International exchange Coordinator and class guardians.	Medium
Primary Excursions	Child safety Conduct. Detailed plans of excursion.	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Greater level of awareness of the assessment of the excursion environment, appropriately briefed and selected staff and volunteers	Individual staff members	Low
Secondary excursions	Child safety Conduct. Detailed plans of excursion.	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Greater level of awareness of the assessment of the excursion environment. Students travelling in greater numbers to and from excursions. Travelling staff members offer to travel with any individual students (or students unsure or anxious about public transport)	Individual staff members and subject teachers. OHS officer, Child safety officer and child safety group. Carried by the College of Teachers	Low
School Camps	Child Safety Code of Conduct	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Greater level of awareness of the assessment of the camp environment and staff selection, appropriateness and training. Awareness of and adherence to Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors from DET	Outdoor staff, Child safety officer and College of Teachers	Low
Students unsupervised when visiting towns whilst travelling to Outdoor Ed. Camps	Usually small towns where the bus location is close by and staff are aware of where the students are. Students often together in groups.	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Students better educated about their right to safety in school and in all environments (including whilst on camp). D.Ed. staff to request students travel in groups of multiple people or not use towns to have rest breaks for younger age groups.	Outdoor Ed. staff	Low

16. Final Child Safety Room / Office Assessment

2022.Term 3.Room Assessment (classrooms, offices, storage, learning spaces) Rooms are assessed based on their access and ability for students to be seen by other students or staff during the school day	Cleared as appropriate spaces: Child Safety Standards (Yes-Y. No-N. N/A (no access except maintenance and cleaners outside school hours). To be determined -TBD). R/M-Risk Management in place	Action Required to make room safe (planned completion date for actions)
Yr.11 Classroom	Y	
Yr.12 Classroom	Y	
Library	Y	
Support ed room (Jude)	Y	
Yr. 12 Study room	Y	
Computer room	Y	
Senior Secondary Office 6 – Gary	Y	
Senior Secondary Office 5 – Walter	Y	
Computer Room Office - Alis	Y	
Senior secondary Office 2 – Nerida	Y	
Senior Secondary VCE office 1 – Yasmin		
Senior Secondary VCE (Humanities) office 2 – Shane	Y	
Dark room film development room	RM	Clear protocols for Art Teachers, plus BUILDING NOT CURRENTLY IN USE waiting on renovation
Dark room storage room	RM	
Dark room	RM	
Science building music room	Y	
Yr.10 Lower Classroom	Y	
Yr.10 Upper Classroom	Y	
Welfare office	Y	
Craft storage spaces	N/A STAFF ONLY SPACE	
Craft Room	Y	
Gym South	Y	
Gym North	Y	
Lab1	Y	
Lab2	Y	
Junior Art	Y	
Junior staff storage space	Y	
Junior Art staff office	Y	

Senior Art	Y	
Senior Art office	Y	
Pottery storage space	Y R/M	Risk Management in place
Gym	Y	
Gym office	Y	
Gym change rooms/toilets -girls, boys disabled	Y	
Gym equipment storage room	Y - STAFF ONLY	Staff only
Workout space in gym	Y	
Yr.9 Upper Classroom	Y	
Yr.9 Lower Classroom	Y	
Woodwork room	Y	
Maintenance office	Y	
Maintenance and woodwork preparation space	Y	
Maintenance shed	N/A	
Music shed	R/M	Risk management – located across from other music sheds and band room where lessons are conducted and other staff are present.
Support ed office 1 - Deb	Y	
Yr.8 Upper Classroom	Y	
Yr.8 Lower Classroom	Y	
Yr.8 lower storage space	N/A	
Yr.7 Upper Classroom	Y	
7/8 office - Jo	Y	
Yr.7 Lower Classroom	Y	
Courtyard office (behind 7L)	Y	
Eurythmy Room	Y	
Farm	R/M	Risk management in place
Hall	Y	
Music rooms 1 (Blue room)	Y	
Music rooms 2 (The big up)	Y	
Music room 3 (Hall space)	Y	
Music room 4 - D1	Y	
Music space 5 – D2	Y	
Drama Office	Y	
Drama storage	Y	
Craft storage/office (Wendy)	Y	

Annex	Y	
Annex toilets - male and female	Y	
Oak Hall	Y	
Storage (plant equipment, outside access to café)	Y - STAFF ONLY	
Extra lesson room	Y	
Chairs and tables storage room	Y - STORAGE ONLY	
Curative eurythmy room	Y	
Oak Hall Office - Jess	Y	
Male, female and disabled toilets in Oak Hall	Y	
Support ed. office 4 – Vinnie's	Y	
Café	Y	
Acorn office	Y	
Acorn room	Y	
Class 6 classroom	Y	
Support Ed office 3 - Steff Back of class 6	Y	
Class 5 classroom	Y	
Primary staff office and bathroom	Y	
Class 4 classroom	Y	
Class 3 classroom	Y	
Class 2 classroom	Y	
Class 1 Classroom	Y	
Photocopy room	Y	
Office Lower Storage Space and office staff toilets	Y	
Lower Primary children bathroom	Y	
Sickbay	Y	
Main office 1	Y	
Main office 2 Enrol	Y	
Main office 3 Accounts	Y	
Main office 4 IT/OHS	Y	
Linden kinder	Y	
Peppercorn kinder	Y	
Ring-a-Rosie Room	Y	

17. NOTIFYING REPORTABLE CONDUCT POLICY

Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers and Others

Source of Obligation

The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (the Act) requires the School to investigate and report to the Commission for Children and Young People (Commission) allegations of 'employee' reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct.

The Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has developed the following *Reportable Conduct Policy* which sets out our systems for enabling persons to report reportable conduct and for such reports to be investigated and responded to. This policy is made available to all staff, Volunteers, Contractors, families and students via our website

The Commission's website provides additional guidance and materials which assist the School to understand and meet our obligations under the Act.

Who is an Employee?

For the purposes of the Act, 'employee' is defined as a person aged 18 years or over who is:

- Employed by the School whether or not that person is employed in connection with any work or activities of the School that relate to children; or
- Engaged by the School to provide services, including as a volunteer, contractor, office holder or officer, whether or not the person provides services to children.

Of relevance to the School, the following people are considered to be employees:

- Staff members;
- Volunteers;
- Third Party Contractors; and
- External Education Providers.

For the purposes of this policy, all of the above are referred to collectively as "staff" or "staff members".

What is Reportable Conduct?

Reportable conduct is defined in the Act to include:

- A sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;
- Sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;
- Physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;
- Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; and
- Significant neglect of a child.

"Sexual misconduct" includes:

- Behaviour, physical contact, speech or other communication of a sexual nature, for example 'sexting';
- Inappropriate touching or physical contact;
- Grooming behaviour; and
- Voyeurism.

"Sexual offence" means a serious sexual offence as set out in clause 1 of Schedule 1 of the Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic), which includes rape, attempted rape, sexual assault, incest, various sexual offences against or involving a child, persistent sexual abuse of a child, grooming, and the production, distribution or possession of child abuse material.

"Significant" means, in relation to emotional or psychological harm or neglect, that the harm is more than trivial, but need not be as high as serious and need not have a lasting permanent effect.

Refer to Child Abuse - Definitions and Key Risk Indicators, contained in the Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School Child Protection and Safety Policy 2016, for more information about sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, emotional or psychological harm and neglect.

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines expected standards of behaviour of staff members at the School when interacting with children and young people. Conduct which breaches the Child Safety Code of Conduct will constitute reportable conduct under this policy.

What must be notified?

Under the Act, the School must notify the Commission of a reportable allegation against a staff member. Reportable allegation is defined in the Act to mean any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee of the School has committed:

- Reportable conduct; or
- Misconduct that may involve reportable conduct – whether or not the conduct/misconduct is alleged to have occurred in the course of the person's employment at the School.

Who Must Notify (Please see link below)

Under the Act, any person may disclose a reportable allegation to the Commission (section 16L). A disclosure can be made using an online form available from the Commission's website, by phone or by letter.

At the School, the Chairperson of the College of Teachers is primarily responsible for the School's compliance with the reportable conduct obligations under the Act and must notify the Commission if they become aware of a reportable allegation against an employee of the School.

Four Critical Actions for Schools- Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

Reportable Conduct and Other Reporting Obligations

The Reportable Conduct obligation covered in this policy is separate and distinct from the:

- Mandatory Reporting obligation under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic);
- Obligation to Report a Sexual Offence obligation under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic); and
- Conduct that is Reportable to the Victorian Institute of Teaching under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic).

The threshold for reporting allegations of reportable conduct is much lower than these other reporting obligations and it is expected by the Commission that these reporting obligations will result in reports that will not be sustained following investigation.

Any allegations of criminal conduct, including physical violence, significant emotional or psychological abuse, sexual offences and significant neglect must be reported to the Victorian Police as the first priority.

Internal Reporting of Reportable Allegations

As soon as a person, including a staff member, forms a reasonable belief that a staff member at the School has engaged in reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct (the reportable allegation), the person must notify a Child Protection Officer who must then notify the Chairperson of the College of Teachers. The report may be made verbally or in written form using the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template available from the School office.

While this Template was created for reporting abuse, rather than reportable conduct, it is an excellent way to record as much information about the incident/s as is available.

Where the reportable allegation involves the Chairperson of the College of Teachers, the staff member must notify a Child Protection Officer who must then notify the Board of Directors

It is important to note that the Child Protection Officer does not have a formal role under the Act (unless the Chairperson of the College of Teachers is a designated Child Protection Officer). However, it is the School's policy that the Child Protection Officer is notified first.

Where a verbal report is made by a staff member, it should be followed up with a written report provided to the Chairperson of the College of Teachers within 48 hours of the verbal report. Where a staff member has a reasonable belief that the Chairperson of the College of Teachers has engaged in reportable conduct, verbal and written reports should be given by the Child Protection Officer to the Board of Directors, in person and via email to: directors@mrss.vic.edu.au

Reporting to the Commission: The Chairperson of the College of Teachers

Where the Chairperson of the College of Teachers receives a reportable allegation from any person, including a staff member or a Child Protection Officer they must notify the Commission.

Where the reportable allegation involves the Chairperson of the College of Teachers, the person must notify a Child Protection Officer who must then notify the Board of Directors who will make the report.

There are two stages of reporting.

The Commission must be notified in writing of:

1. the reportable allegation as soon as possible, and in any event within three business days of being notified (Stage One Report); and
2. The proposed next course of action (see below), as soon as practicable, and within 30 days of becoming aware of the reportable allegation (Stage Two Report).

Stage One Report

The report to the Commission must state:

- That a reportable allegation has been made against a staff member;
- The name (including any former name and alias, if known) and date of birth, if known, of the staff member;
- Whether the Victoria Police has been contacted about the reportable allegation;
- The name, address and telephone number of the School; and
- The name of the Chairperson of the College of Teachers or the person making the report.

An online form available on the Commission's website must be used for the Stage One Report. If the staff member is a registered teacher and the misconduct involves a charge, conviction or finding of guilt of a sexual offence, the School must notify the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) immediately under "Conduct that is Reportable to the Victorian Institute of Teaching". **The timing of making a Stage One Report to the Commission under this policy will coincide with the timing of a report made to the VIT.**

Stage Two Report

The report to the Commission must state:

- Detailed information about the reportable allegation;
- Whether or not the School proposes to take any disciplinary or other action in relation to the staff member and the reasons why it intends to take, or not to take, that action; and
- Any written submissions made to the Chairperson of the College of Teachers concerning the reportable allegation that a staff member wished to have considered in determining what, if any disciplinary or other action should be taken in relation to the staff member.

Any allegation of child abuse, including physical violence, significant emotional or psychological abuse, sexual offences or significant neglect, must be reported to the Victorian Police.

What Happens after a Report to the Commission is made?

After the Chairperson of the College of Teachers has made a report to the Commission, they must ensure that an appropriate investigation of the reportable allegation is conducted.

The investigation can be conducted by the Chairperson of the College of Teachers or the Directors can appoint an independent investigator.

The Chairperson of the College of Teachers (or the Directors in the event that the allegation involves the Chairperson of the College of Teachers) must notify the Commission of who will be conducting the investigation.

The investigation must be conducted in accordance with the rules of natural justice. For example, the investigation should be conducted without bias and the person against whom the allegation is made should be given the right to respond.

Upon the conclusion of the investigation, the Chairperson of the College of Teachers must give the Commission:

- A copy of the findings of the investigation and the reasons for those findings; and
- Details of any disciplinary or other action that the Chairperson of the College of Teachers proposes to take in relation to the staff member and the reasons for that action.
- If the Chairperson of the College of Teachers does not propose to take any disciplinary or other action in relation to the staff member, the reasons why no action is to be taken.

Under the Act, a staff member may seek a review by the Commission of a finding made at the conclusion of an investigation.

Information Sharing: Children and Parents/Guardians

Under the Act, the Chairperson of the College of Teachers may disclose:

- Information about the progress of the investigation;
- The findings, reasons for the findings and the recommendations made at the conclusion of the investigation; and
- An action taken in response to those findings.

To:

- The child who is the subject of the reporting allegation;
- A parent of the child;
- A guardian of the child; and/or
- The DHHS if the child is under its care.

Information Sharing: Schools, the Commission and Others

Under the Act, the Chairperson of the College of Teachers may disclose information in relation to:

- A reportable allegation;
- A concern that reportable conduct has been committed;
- The investigation of a reportable allegation or concern about reportable conduct;
- The findings of an investigation and the reasons or recommendations made at the conclusion of the investigation; and
- Any action taken in response to those findings.

To:

- The Commission;
- VRQA;
- The Chief Commissioner of Police;
- If necessary for the purposes of an investigation, an independent investigator;
- If necessary for the purposes of a Working with Children Check, the Secretary to the Department of Justice and Regulation; and
- A relevant Minister.

Publication of Information

The School must not publish information that would enable the identification of:

- A person or who notified the Commission; or
- A child in relation to whom a reportable allegation was made or a finding of reportable conduct was made.

The Act provides more information on the meaning of 'publish', which includes making the information publicly available in writing or email.

Powers of the Commission

The Commission has broad powers under the Act in relation to investigating a reportable allegation at the School. The Commission may visit the School, inspect documents and interview staff members or children involved in the reportable allegation.

The School must assist the Commission in all reasonable aspects of its investigation.

Record Keeping

The School maintains records of these reportable allegations, written reports and reportable conduct investigation findings indefinitely.

Records relating to a child protection incident are only disposed of in accordance with our Records Management Policy.

Draft Policy prepared by: Art Curl

July 2017

Reviewed:

July 2022

Next Review Due:

July 2024

by Damian Stone, Jessica Moyes

Responding to, and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse.

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School (MRSS) is a school of approximately 500 students from early childhood to year 12. Being a reasonably small school from K-12 and offering a distinctly different philosophical basis of education to other schools, creates a close and multi-layered school community. We know from statistics that this does not, in itself, mean it is a safe environment for all children always.

MRSS has a number of methods and procedures in place for ensuring the ongoing safety, health and well-being of all children in our care, regardless of their background, language, or ability.

At MRSS we have procedures in place for anyone to report to one of our School's Child Safety Coordinators directly or to any member of the Administration Group (who will then pass the report onto one of the Child Safety Coordinators), in the instance of a suspicion that a child is in an unsafe, unhealthy or abusive situation, or has suffered from abuse, harm or neglect, and for support following a disclosure by a student.

Abuse of a child may be difficult to detect and can take many forms. In a school setting such as ours, the abuser may be a staff member, parent, carer, volunteer, another adult (i.e. teacher trainee, contractor, member of the public), or even another child. The abuse may be over an extended period of time with almost undetectable risk indicators, or it may be an incident of an extreme nature with immediate and obvious consequences. In each case, once an allegation has been made, clear guidelines are in place for prompt and safeguarding actions to be implemented.

Depending on the allegation or disclosure made, MRSS will take all matters of child abuse to the Victorian Child Protection Service (131278), or the Police (000), or both.

Avenues of communication for reporting anything from a suspicion to an evidence-based allegation are clearly laid out for staff during curriculum days, staff meetings, faculty meetings and during our College meetings. Faculty and College meetings are held weekly, with regular opportunities for making observations and sharing concerns regarding student well-being. A suspicion of signs of neglect or abuse may be formed through discussions and consultations with experienced staff, Class Teachers, Class Guardians and/or practitioners. For instance, a Curative Education Group that meets weekly with Therapeutic practitioners is an opportunity to consolidate or confirm a concern regarding a student's well-being.

At MRSS the procedures for reporting and responding to allegations of child abuse are designed and implemented taking into account the particular and diverse characteristics of our school community.

The appropriate procedures are made available to all staff via the Staff Handbook, and to the school community via the Parent Handbook, school website, school newsletter from time to time and from our School office upon request. Like most schools, our office is a central and pivotal part of our communication network and may be seen as the axle of the wheel in the chain of communication. Parents are familiar with the office staff and know it to be the place where enquiries are commonly made. For parents uncomfortable with this avenue of communication, other avenues are clearly laid out regularly in our school newsletter, emails to parents, meetings, and our parent handbook. The first port of call for parents may be their child's Class Teacher or Guardian. The Class Teacher has the responsibility for one group of children from Class One until Class Eight and therefore develops a close relationship with the children and their parents of that class. In communications, parents are encouraged to go directly to their child's Class Teacher. In matters of suspected child abuse parents may go directly to the Administration Group, a member of that group, or to the Chairperson of the College of Teachers.

MRSS will respond to all allegations of child abuse in an appropriate manner including:

- Informing the appropriate authorities and fully cooperating with any investigation;
- Protecting any child connected to the allegation until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected;
- Taking particular measures in response to an allegation that concerns a culturally diverse child, gender diverse, or a child with a disability; and
- Secure and retain all records of the allegation and the school's response to it.
- Staff are encouraged to seek appropriate support from the Welfare Coordinator, the Support Education Team, and/or the appropriate Class Teacher/s or Guardians.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Role - Board of Directors/chairperson of College.

Responsibility - Lead the school's child safety culture. Provide resources for the Child Safety Program to be implemented. Review and analyse the Child Safety Program annually.

Role - College of Teachers/Administration Group

Responsibility – Develop, implement, model and enhance the school's child safe strategies. Proactively monitor the effectiveness of strategies. Review child safe strategies.

Develop policies, procedures, and supporting documentation including appropriate communications and resources. Ensure effective communication between parent body and community in regards to all matters around child safety.

Role - Leading Child Safety Coordinator.

Responsibility - Lead the delivery of programs for children about the school's child safety strategies through the schools well-being programs and through the curriculum.

Ensure all staff are have all of the required training as a minimum.

Develop policies, procedures and supporting documentation including appropriate communications and resources. Prompt, review and analysis of policies and procedures, risk management, incidents that occur within MRSS. Ensure the review schedule, coordinating meeting schedules with certain groups and ensuring communication between parent body and community is fostered.

Role - Child Safety Coordinators/OHS Coordinator.

Responsibility - Train staff and induct contractors and volunteers in the school's Child Safety Strategies.

Develop policies, procedures and supporting documentation including appropriate communications and resources.

Role - Class Teachers, Class Guardians, Welfare Coordinator.

Responsibility - As the first point of contact; educate and monitor students in their care. Provide support and enact processes and policies. Be vigilant and aware of the Risk Indicators for Child Abuse and Neglect.

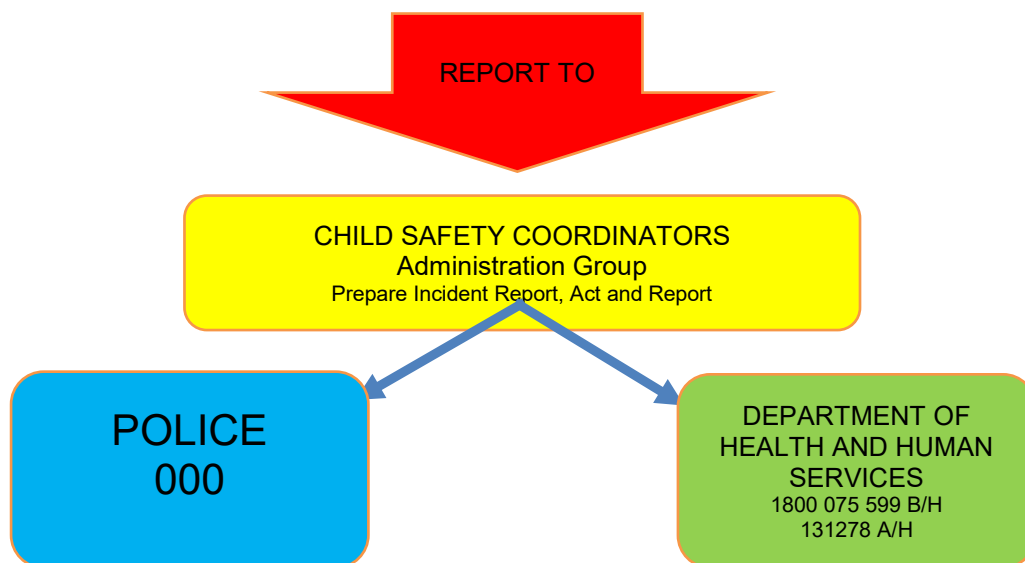
Monitor and maintain clear messages of child safety for all members of the community through the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of the school.

Role - Support Education Team.

Responsibility - Provide support to ensure the diversity of our student needs is met.

REPORTING

[Four Critical Actions for Child Abuse diagram](#)



PLEASE NOTE THAT REPORTING THE MATTER INTERNALLY DOES NOT RELEASE YOU FROM OTHER LEGAL AND REGULATORY REPORTING OBLIGATIONS YOU MAY HAVE, INCLUDING REPORTING TO THE COMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CASE OF REPORTABLE CONDUCT

Risk Indicators for Child Abuse and Neglect

Definitions

Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined in Section 3 of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) as including:

- Any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or a grooming offence listed in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic);
- The infliction of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- The serious neglect of a child.

Family Violence

Whilst the term “family violence” does not form part of the official definition of “child abuse”, the impact of family violence on a child is commonly referred to as a form of child abuse.

In Victoria section 5 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) defines “family violence” as behaviour by a person towards a family member that is:

- Physically or sexually abusive;
- Emotionally or psychologically abusive;
- Economically abusive;
- Threatening;
- Coercive; or
- In any other way controlling or dominating the family member and causes them to feel fear for their own, or other family member’s safety or wellbeing.

Behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or be exposed to the effects of such behaviour also falls within the definition of “family violence”.

Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse can be divided into four categories:

- Physical;
- Sexual;
- Emotional; and
- Neglect.

Examples of forms of abuse and indicators for neglect

It is important to be aware that the presence of an indicator of harm doesn't necessarily mean that a child is being abused. Conversely, the absence of indicators doesn't necessarily mean that the child is not being abused. What follows is not an exhaustive list

Physical Abuse

This consists of any serious non-accidental form of injury or harm inflicted on a child. It includes beating, shaking, burning and assault with weapons. Children who are physically harmed may have frequent injuries explained as accidental.

Physical Indicators:

- Bruises or welts, often of different ages
- Burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Bald patches where hair has been pulled out
- Lacerations or abrasions
- Poisoning

Behavioural Indicators:

- Child wears inappropriate clothing in attempt to cover injuries
- Extreme wariness of adult contact
- Apprehensive when other children cry or shout
- Behavioural extremes, such as aggressiveness/withdrawal
- Fear of parents / caregiver, reluctance to go home
- Poor sleeping patterns, fear of dark, nightmares
- Reports injury by parents or gives inappropriate explanation of injury
- Attaches too readily to strangers
- Frequent absenteeism/prolonged school refusal
- Aggressive behaviour towards others
- Drug or alcohol abuse

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when someone (adult, adolescent or another child) uses their power, force or authority to involve a child/children in sexual activity. It can take the form of contact or non-contact acts such as exposure to pornography, on-line grooming etc.

Sexual abuse is not usually identified through obvious physical indicators. The presence of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge, frequent urinary tract infections can indicate sexual abuse.

In older children and young people, sexual harm is more likely to be identified through self-disclosure by the child to a trusted person, rather than by observing physical indicators. In babies and young children, the physical indicators are observed through a medical examination.

Behavioural Indicators

- Reports of sexual harm by caregiver
- A fear of home, specific place, particular adult
- Constant complaint of headaches, abdominal pains
- Reluctance to participate in physical or recreational activities
- Sophisticated sexual knowledge beyond what is expected for age and environment
- Unusual level of interest in own or other's genitals, taking into consideration their age and circumstances
- Personality change
- Serious difficulties with peers, adults
- Regression in toilet training, for example: soiling, wetting
- Excessive concerns about privacy
- Refusal to go home or truancy
- Self-destructive behaviour
- Wearing of provocative clothing or layers of clothing to hide injuries

Emotional Harm

Emotional harm occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or subjected to threats, hostility or persistent coldness. If a young person grows up in this climate, they can develop a negative self-image that impedes development and prevents them from reaching full potential. They may develop personality or behavioural disorders, or become an adult filled with self-doubt and internalized rage, unable to form sustained and intimate relationships.

Physical indicators

There are few physical indicators of emotional harm:

- Speech disorders; and
- Delays in physical, emotional or mental development.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Behavioural extremes which cannot be explained by other circumstances;
- Extremely low self-esteem;
- Compliant, passive, withdrawn, tearful, apathetic;
- Aggressive, demanding;
- Depression;
- Constant high anxiety;

- Poor social and interpersonal skills;
- Delayed development, for example in speech;
- Persistent habit disorders, such as sucking, biting, washing, rocking; and/or
- Unexplained academic delays.

Neglect

Neglect includes all instances where a caregiver has failed to take adequate precautions to ensure the child's safety and provide food, clothing and shelter for the child. Many cases of neglect require a welfare and family support response, rather than a protective response. However, in cases where neglect has resulted in physical injury, emotional harm or health impairment, it may be considered as abuse.

Physical Indicators:

- Consistent hunger;
- Failure to thrive or malnutrition;
- Poor hygiene that can result in health problems and/or ostracism by peers;
- Inappropriate dress for the climatic conditions;
- Consistently without adequate supervision and at risk of injury or harm;
- Unattended health problems or medical needs;
- Abandonment; or
- Health or dietary practice which endangers a child's health or development.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Stealing food;
- Extended stays at school;
- Constant fatigue, listlessness, or falling asleep in class;
- Delinquent acts: vandalism, alcohol or drug abuse;
- Little positive interaction with parent/caregiver;
- Prolonged absenteeism or school refusal;
- Aggressive or inappropriate behaviour; or
- Isolation from their peer group.

INCIDENT REPORT

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School has zero tolerance for child abuse. This will be a primary focus of our care and decision-making.

ALL INCIDENT REPORTS SHALL BE STORED SECURELY IN THE OFFICE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION GROUP OF THE COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Person taking report:	
Incident Reporter: Wishes to remain anonymous?	Y / N
Date of Incident:	
Time of Incident:	
Location of Incident:	
Name/s of child/children involved:	
Name/s of staff / contractor / volunteer / other adult involved:	
What did you see?	
Other relevant details:	

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000 and DHHS on 131278

Is the child from a diverse cultural / linguistic background?

Please specify _____

Please categorise the incident

- Physical violence
- Sexual offence
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect

Office Use

Date incident report received:	
Staff member managing incident:	
Action taken:	
Follow-up date:	
Incident reference:	

Has the incident been reported?

DHHS Child Protection	
Police	
Commission for Children and Young People	
Other:	

Always ensure that the child involved and the witnesses and or reporters are safe and supported

Review of Incident:

It is critical that we, as an organization and as individuals, learn from things that happen and that we change our systems, responses, procedures, protocols, policies, training and thinking to fulfil our responsibility to protect the children we teach.

Date reviewed:	
Reviewed by:	
Action taken / recommended:	
Action completed:	

18. COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

Procedures for dealing with a Complaint or Grievance

The following steps will be followed by the School's representative:

Acknowledgement of the Complaint or Grievance

- A verbal complaint or grievance will be acknowledged and recorded by the School's representative at the time of communication of the complaint or grievance.
- A written complaint or grievance will be acknowledged in writing by the School's representative within two working days.

Receiving the Complaint or Grievance

- The role of each person at the meeting or investigation will be established.
- The complainant will be listened to and supported and their concerns will be acted upon at the earliest opportunity.
- An agreement on a timeline for investigating and resolving the complaint or grievance will be reached.
- The complainant may choose to withdraw the complaint or grievance at any time.

Investigating or Assessing the Complaint or Grievance

- The process to be followed will be outlined.
- The parties will be informed that any information obtained in the meeting or investigation will be confidential.
- A chronology of events (who, what, why, when, how, etc.) will be established with the complainant.
- Any applicable School policies or procedures will be identified for the complainant.
- It will be explained that the respondent will be given the right of response.
- An independent investigator may be appointed if required.

Resolving the Complaint or Grievance

- The complainant will be asked for the outcome they are hoping for (best case scenario) and the next steps will be discussed, providing a reasonable and agreed time frame of when to report back or meet again.
- It will be explained that the complainant cannot be adversely affected because they have made a complaint or grievance and they will be notified about who to report matters to internally if they feel that they are being adversely affected.
- Time will be provided for the complainant to ask questions.
- Detailed notes will be taken of the conversation (including dates, people involved), including any supporting documentation.

Providing an Outcome

- The complainant will be provided with a written summary of the meeting and clarification of the next steps to be taken, within a set time frame.
- Should the matter remain unresolved then either the complainant or the School may refer the matter to a higher authority, as outlined in this policy.

The meeting should be conducive to maintaining positive relationships and the School's representative should ensure that there is a fair, objective analysis of the situation.

If the matter is not resolved

If the complainant wishes to pursue an unresolved matter, the issue should be referred to the College of Teachers. The College reserves discretion as to making a final decision as to how the complaint or grievance will be resolved. The complainant also has the right to seek further resolution through relevant independent authorities, such as Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) or the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

Please note that this section on complaints and grievances is relevant specifically to Child Safety. If you are interested in a more general overview, please refer to the School's general Complaints and Grievances Policy on the school website or contact the school office.

REVIEW and IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS of CHILD SAFETY and WELLBEING

Guidelines Created: Date July 2022 by: Damian Stone and Jessica Moyes

Review Guidelines: Date July 2024

Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School reviews child safety and wellbeing policy, procedures, practises, risks and statements at a minimum of every two years. This process is in consultation with the board of directors, college of teachers, staff, students and families. A review may be scheduled earlier than the scheduled two years if a serious concern, incident, complaint, legislative change, regulatory change, new activities or buildings need to be assessed or online situations or technologies change, or a process or procedure has become redundant or ineffective.

The Child Safety Coordinator will manage the review schedule and initiate the review process. The Child Safety Coordinator may form small groups to assist in reviewing, updating and implementing changes identified. The board of directors and College of Teachers will all approve the final changes and review.

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy including Child Safe Standards that will be reviewed:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy;
- Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- Child Safety Attestation;

- Child Safety Risk Register;
- Complaints and Grievances Policy;
- Who can I talk to Information sheet;
- Procedures for responding to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse;
- Recordkeeping and Information management protocols;
- Policies and practices on accessibility, cultural safety, diversity and inclusion;
- Recruitment policies and practices for staff and volunteers;
- Induction and OHS programs;
- Training for staff and volunteers;
- Communication aimed at students, their families and the community about child safety; and
- How the school is embedding child safety and rights in the curriculum.

Actions to support then review of Child Safety Practices

- Develop a Review Schedule Checklist.
- Establish a working group led by the child safety coordinator to review and update policies and procedures when required.
- The Child Safety coordinator will monitor and manage child safety risks using the risk register.
- Identify the cause of every child safety incident and monitor for the repetition of any patterns or breakdown in any school processes or procedures.
- Formally invite families and community members to participate every 2 years in feedback regarding our child safety policies.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers, students, families and community members in review processes. Refer to Child Safe Standard 4 for actions on how to engage families and communities.
- Review changes and report outcomes to be communicated to staff, volunteers, parents and the school community through our Child Safety communication sessions as outlined in the implementation in communication process below.

IMPLEMENTATION and COMMUNICATION of CHILD SAFE POLICIES and PROCEDURES

To ensure the implementation of MRSS child safety policies and procedures and their efficacy, MRSS follows the points below which all feedback to the child safety coordinator and the child safety group. Feeding back to the Child Safety coordinator and child safety group enables MRSS to identify any implementation issues and review procedures and processes to continuously improve our processes.

- Keep records of documentation, such as board meeting papers and minutes, outlining recommendations on how child safe practices can be improved and implemented.

- Document complaints and concerns and document appropriate responses and mitigations.
- Review through consultation of gaps, weaknesses or failures in policies.
- Make review findings and recommendations easy to access and understand and share them with the board of directors and college of teachers.
- Create a space to communicate review outcomes to students in age-appropriate ways through the Healthy Relationships Program.
- Inform the school community of any child safety policy changes were relevant or applicable via newsletter or parent handbook, parent meeting or direction to the school website.
- Invite members of families and the community to formal discussion as part of the review process of the policies.
- Follow Annual Meeting Schedule to ensure all feedback, engagement and information is communicated and feedback.
- Follow Communication Checklist to ensure all updates and information in regards to child safety policies is communicated to all parties and up to date.