

**MWPS has a NO tolerance policy to child abuse.**

**MWPS has embedded an organisational culture of Child Safety. MWPS 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.**

**In 2016 MWPS has implemented the following Child Safe strategies:-**

- all staff, volunteers and community members of Mount Waverley PS are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of students
- updated our Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy this year to include Child Safe strategies, practices, process and information through consultation with the community and ratified by School Council
- all staff are well informed about Child Safe practices and have signed the MWPS Child Safe Code of Conduct
- teachers undertake Mandatory Reporting training each year and understand the process of reporting concerns directly to the school leadership if a concern arises
- the school supports all students through a preventative and intervention approach led by the Wellbeing Coordinator, School Leadership, Level Leaders
- teachers attend team and staff planning meetings and participate regularly in discussions about student wellbeing and safety
- teachers implement a number of values based wellbeing programs at each level of the school including 'The Connect To School Program', Life Habits, Circle Time, and 'Life Education'
- teachers promote an understanding of rights, responsibilities and shared expectations
- students and parents are asked to agree to shared expectations
- student leaders have an active role in supporting other students across the school through the Peer Mediation Program, Student Representative Council and Year 5 and Prep Buddy Program which encourages positive relationships between Foundation and Year 5 students and follows through to Year 1 and Year 6
- the Student Code of Conduct is actively promoted across the school. Through the promotion of class and school rules and agreed expectations, the school informs students and their parents of the consequences and course of action for inappropriate behaviours
- students are encouraged to exhibit the school values, with positive behaviour recognized through citizenship, excellence and classroom awards, verbal recognition, house points, stickers and Principal awards. Student achievements are acknowledged at assemblies and in the school newsletter
- teachers provide effective supervision of students in class and in the yard, on excursions and school camps
- the School works collaboratively with students and parents/ carers to establish fair and respectful behaviour policies and practices, based on the school's values, expected social competencies and positive peer relationships.
- there are intervention strategies in place to address inappropriate behaviours which can negatively impact on the learning environment of the self and others.
- we recognise some students, as a group or as individuals may need extra social, emotional or educational support to flourish at school, and so we put in place strategies to identify these students and provide them with the support they need
- teachers and students are supported by the DE&T Psychologist, Social Worker, Speech Therapist and outside support agencies
- Child Safe information is available on our school website
- MWPS Duty of Care policy and Mandatory Reporting policy have been developed

- replacement teachers and contractors are made aware of our Child Safe Code of Conduct and expectations
- recruitment practices are screened and include employment of VIT registered teachers and school personnel with successfully completed Police Checks and/or Working with Children Checks
- screening practices occur for community volunteers, visitors and contractors who are supervised and have current Working With Children Checks



## MWPS Child Safe Code of Conduct

**MWPS has a NO tolerance policy to abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment.**

**All staff, volunteers and community members of Mount Waverley PS are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of students, as noted below.**

**All personnel of MWPS are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of students by:**

- adhering to MWPS Student Wellbeing, Engagement and Inclusion Policy and upholding MWPS statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect students from abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment
- treating everyone with respect
- teaching students how to use electronic media safely and providing safety curriculum and opportunities to practice safety skills
- being observant of student behaviours and vigilant in supervision of students
- being perceptive of signs of distress or suspected incidents of abuse, neglect or bullying
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you they or another student has been abused or bullied and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal student's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable adults are not left alone with a student
- making efforts to remove opportunities for abuse or bullying by actively supervising the yard and classroom and other learning environments including excursions, camps, first aid, bus travel, swimming programs
- reporting any allegations of student abuse to the school Principal / Student Wellbeing Coordinator/ School Leaders, and ensuring any allegation are reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any student safety concerns to the school Principal / Student Wellbeing Coordinator/ School Leaders
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible the student is removed from the source of distress and is safe
- encouraging students to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them
- undertaking Mandatory Reporting updates and following reporting guidelines
- understanding and complying with all reporting processes and obligations

**Staff and volunteers must not:**

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse

- develop any special relationships with students which could be seen as favouritism for example offering gifts or special treatment for specific students
- exhibit behaviours with students which may be construed as unnecessarily physical i.e. sitting on lap
- put students at risk of abuse for example locking doors
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with students or do things of a personal nature for a student who, if deemed capable, can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes. Support or assistance for a student with special needs and/or disability may be required as agreed by the Student Support Group, School Leadership, School Nurse
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of students i.e. personal social activities
- use inappropriate language in the presence of students
- express personal views on culture, race, sexuality in the presence of students
- discriminate against any student, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a student or their family outside of our organisation without the school Principal/AP knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate
- have any online contact with a child or their family unless necessary, for example, providing families with e-newsletters and/or emails which are of an educational nature
- exchange personal contact details such as a phone number, social networking sites or email addresses other than those which are of an educational nature
- photograph or video a student without the consent of parent/guardian
- work with students under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the School Principal, Student Wellbeing Coordinator, School Leadership.

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

Staff Name \_\_\_\_\_

Staff signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Child Safe Processes and Procedures

**MWPS has comprehensive child safe processes and procedures which include:-**

- zero tolerance to child abuse and a commitment to child safety
- a commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal students, cultural safety for students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for students with a disability
- expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers to ensure the protection of students as outlined in the *MWPS Child Safe Code of Conduct*
- Mandatory Training for all staff
- support for staff, students and parents by School Leadership, SSO and or outside agencies
- the provision of contact details to staff and parent/carers to access information in relation to student wellbeing and child safety
- reporting procedures and leadership responsibilities in relation to student wellbeing and child safety
- recruitment practices which are screened and include employment of VIT registered teachers with successfully completed Police Checks
- recruitment practices which are screened for school personnel which include Police Checks and/or Working with Children Checks
- screening practices for community volunteers, visitors and contractors who are supervised and have current Working With Children Checks
- risk management strategy and procedures

**If a student discloses an incident of abuse, Staff will respond to the allegation/s using the following process and procedure:-**

1. Separating them from the other students discreetly and listen to them carefully
2. Letting the student use their own words to explain what has occurred
3. Reassuring the student that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and they are doing the right thing
4. Advising the student you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details
5. Explaining to them this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific staff in the school, or the police
6. Not making promises to the student such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except you will do your best to keep them safe
7. Not leaving the student in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them
8. As quickly as possible after the disclosure, report the disclosure to the Principal / Student Wellbeing Coordinator/ School Leadership, Police or Child Protection

9. As quickly as possible, ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately. Record the information using the student's words. Ensure the record is stored securely
10. Together with school Leadership complete an incident report form using the student's words/ language
11. The School Principal/ Leadership may need to investigate allegations further, interview staff, students, personnel.
12. School Leadership will respond to a report of abuse as soon as possible
13. School Leadership will notify parent of student/s of concern as soon as possible
14. School Leadership action may include contacting outside agencies, Police, Child Protection
15. School Leadership action may include contacting Emergency and Security Management, IRIS Alert, Student Online Case System, SSSO, Legal Branch, NEVR.

**If a parent/carer says their child has been abused within the school environment / organisation or raises a concern.**

1. Explain MWPS has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously
2. Ask about the wellbeing of the child
3. Allow the parent / carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
4. Advise the parent / carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details
5. Explain to the parent / carer the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Principal, Student Wellbeing Coordinator / School Leadership, the Police or Child Protection
6. Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe
7. Explain the Principal / Student Wellbeing Coordinator / School Leadership will be notified as soon as possible
8. Teacher should complete an incident report form using the parent / carer words as soon as possible after the concern has been raised
9. Reassure the parent they will have contact / support / advice as soon as possible from School Leadership and or specialist / outside agency if applicable
10. School Principal / Leadership will provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together
  - Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be
  - Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely
11. You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking

with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

12. If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.
13. Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on [communicating with people with a disability](#) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities)>.

14. If you believe a student is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

## Legal responsibilities

While the child safe standards focus on organisations, every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their school / organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The **failure to disclose** criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

More information about [failure to disclose](#) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

More information about [mandatory reporting](#) is available in the *Child protection manual* <[www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting)>.

**Mandatory reporters** (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](#) <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first)>.

The **failure to protect** criminal offence (commenced on 1 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Further information about [failure to protect](#) can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation website

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence), and the Department of Health and Human Services website>.