

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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1 Organisational Statement

- 1.1 Mastery Schools Australia (the School or MSA) is committed to ensuring the safety, protection and wellbeing of all children and young people. The School upholds the rights of all students to feel safe, respected, and supported, and is dedicated to establishing and maintaining a child-safe culture through effective leadership, clear expectations, and strong child protection systems.
- 1.2 The School also expects all staff, contractors, volunteers, parents/carers, and students to share this commitment to child safety by actively supporting the School's policies, procedures, and practices relating to child protection, including mandatory reporting obligations, respectful behaviour, and child-focused engagement.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff, contractors, volunteers, students and parents/carers in relation to the Tasmanian operations and it is the responsibility of all working for or enrolled at the school to understand and comply with this policy.

3 Purpose

- 3.1 This policy provides clear guidelines to all staff, contractors, and volunteers regarding their role in creating a safe, inclusive, and protective environment for children and young people within MSA schools operating in Tasmania (TAS).
- 3.2 To ensure such cooperation and support, this Policy outlines the school's expectations for identifying and managing child safety risks, responding to allegations or concerns, and embedding a culture of safety, empowerment, and accountability across all areas of the school's operations.

4 Related Documents

- (a) Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures
- (b) Child Safe Code of Conduct
- (c) Child Safety Register
- (d) Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure
- (e) Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures
- (f) Pastoral Care Policy and Procedure

5 References

- (a) Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023 (Tas)
- (b) Education Act 2016 (Tas)
- (c) Education Regulations 2017 (Tas)
- (d) Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (Tas)

- (e) Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas)
- (f) National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- (g) Australian Human Rights Commission – Child Safe Organisations Guidelines

6 Definitions

Term	Definition
Child or Young Person	A person under the age of 18 years.
Child Abuse	Includes any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, or serious neglect. This also includes exposure to family violence and other forms of abuse recognised under Tasmanian legislation.
Child Safety	Encompasses all actions and processes to protect children and young people from abuse, neglect, exploitation or harm, and promote their right to feel safe, valued and included in all aspects of school life. This includes risks arising from online interactions, self-harm, and exposure to unsafe environments.
Child Safety Officer (CSO)	A designated staff member trained to support, guide, and respond to child safety matters and concerns in accordance with school procedures.
Mandatory Reporter	A person legally required to report suspected cases of child abuse or harm under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas), including teachers, principals, psychologists, police officers, and medical professionals.
Reportable Conduct	Behaviour by an employee, volunteer or contractor involving child abuse, grooming, serious misconduct, neglect, or conduct that causes psychological harm. May trigger investigation or reporting obligations.
School Environment	Any physical or virtual location where school-related activities occur, including classrooms, camps, excursions, online platforms, and school events.
Staff	All persons employed by the School, including teachers, school leaders, administration, support workers, and contractors who interact with students.
Volunteer	Any person engaged by the School in an unpaid capacity to support student learning, wellbeing or school operations.
Mastery Schools Australia or MSA within this Policy	Refers to Mastery Schools Australia's Tasmanian Operations

7 Recognising Child Abuse

7.1 The legal definition of “child abuse” is:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming; and
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm and the serious neglect of a child.

7.2 This includes conduct towards, against, with or in the presence of a child or student and threatening to engage in such conduct. Some examples include:

- (a) forced marriage;
- (b) family violence;
- (c) subjecting a child to a change or suppression practice on the basis of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Types of Abuse	More Details and Examples
Sexual offence or grooming	Harassment. Compelling sexual touching. Encouraging a child to engage in, or be involved in, sexual activity.
Physical violence or abuse	See indicators of harm below.
Serious emotional and psychological harm	When a child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm that causes the child’s emotional or intellectual development is or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child’s parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm.
Serious neglect	Neglect is an omission. Serious harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

Indicators of harm can be behavioural or physical. Indicators of harm vary for different types of child abuse and can co-occur with multiple types of child abuse. Examples of indicators of harm include but are not limited to:

Physical Violence	
- unexplained bruises, burns, welts, cuts grazes or scratches (or vague or unlikely explanations) - avoidance of physical contact, or disproportionate reactions or limited emotion displayed - unexplained absences and decline in academic performance	- wearing clothing that is unsuitable for the weather conditions (to hide injuries) - substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts
Sexual Offences	
- sexualised behaviours - withdrawal, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, self-harm - manifestation of psychological diagnoses including anxiety, depression and substance misuse - presence of sexually transmitted diseases - signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital or rectal area - frequent urinary tract infections - pregnancy (actual or suspected) - self-mutilation - displaying age-inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge	- inappropriate expressions of affection - sudden fears of specific places or particular adults - obsessive and compulsive washing - complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea - sleeping difficulties - poor self-care or personal hygiene - regressive behaviours such as speech loss - substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts
Emotional or psychological harm	
- delays in emotional, mental or physical development - speech impairments such as stuttering or being selectively mute - rocking, thumb-sucking or other infantile behaviours - eating disorders - exhibiting high anxiety or symptoms of stress - poor self-image or low self-esteem	- displaying aggressive, demanding or attention-seeking behaviour - compulsive lying or stealing - unexplained mood swings or depression - poor social and interpersonal skills - excessive neatness or cleanliness - substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempt
Neglect	
- Frequent hunger, or stealing or begging for food - Poor hygiene - Lack adequate or suitable clothing - Refusal or reluctance to go home - appearing dirty and unwashed	- inadequate shelter or unsanitary living conditions - aggressive or self-destructive behaviour - involvement in criminal activity

• unattended health problems • appearing pale and weak	• poor, irregular or non-attendance at school • limited positive interaction with parents, carers or guardians • poor academic performance • substance abuse
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8 Policy Statement

- 8.1 The school is committed to providing a safe environment for all children, and preventing child abuse by identifying risks early, removing and reducing these risks. We have no tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently in accordance with our organisational policies and procedures.
- 8.2 We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's or young person's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- 8.3 The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy has been developed with reference to the Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania's Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework. This framework provides a tailored, best-practice approach to promoting child safety and wellbeing across Tasmanian institutions and complements the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- 8.4 All management and staff (Board members, staff and volunteers) of MSA are responsible for protecting the interests and safety of children. This Policy and our other child safe procedures, codes, practices and strategies promote and adhere to Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023 (Tas) to prevent and respond to child abuse. Some of the ways in which we support and protect all children are:
- A culture of child safety, from management to participants, including scheduling child safety as an agenda item at monthly Board meetings and weekly staff meetings;
 - A Child Safe policy and procedures including processes for responding to and reporting all instances of suspected child abuse;
 - Registration to Work with Vulnerable People (RWVP) are required for all management and staff (Board members, staff and volunteers);
 - A Code of Conduct for all management and staff (Board members, staff and volunteers) that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children;
 - Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing management and staff (Board members, staff and volunteers), including regular professional development;

- (f) We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks;
- (g) Following our Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures established under the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023 (Tas)*

8.5 Any enquiries regarding Child Safety should be directed to a CSO or the Principal.

9 Roles and Responsibilities

All members of the school community to share responsibility for child safety. Specific duties apply to different roles within the School to ensure that child protection and wellbeing are embedded in all aspects of school operations.

9.1 Board of Directors

The Board is responsible for:

- (a) ensuring child safety and wellbeing is embedded in leadership, governance and culture;
- (b) ensuring appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place, including processes to respond to risks, complaints, concerns, disclosures, with regular reviews and evaluation of child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices after any significant child safety incident or at least every two years;
- (c) ensuring complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures and inform continuous improvement;
- (d) implementing policies, procedures and codes of conduct to ensure Staff and Volunteers know how to protect and prevent child abuse, and report it when it occurs or is suspected;
- (e) embedding a culture of child safety and wellbeing that promotes the identification and mitigation of risks;
- (f) monitoring the School's overall compliance with its child safety policies, procedures and practices;
- (g) reviewing the Principal's reports as to the School's child safety practices and compliance; and
- (h) reviewing the CSO's Wellbeing Report, which includes information about incidents, allegations, concerns and disclosures.

9.2 Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- (a) performing the responsibilities of the Head of Entity of the School for mandatory reporting;

- (b) taking all practical measures to ensure this Policy is implemented effectively and that a child safe culture is maintained in all School Environments;
- (c) appointing an investigator to investigate reports of child abuse and harm, and ensuring that the investigation is carried out in accordance with legislative requirements;
- (d) ensuring Staff and Volunteers engaged in child-connected work receive training and information on child safety consistent with this Policy;
- (e) ensuring all adults in the School community are aware of their obligation to report suspected child abuse and harm, or risk of child abuse and harm;
- (f) promptly responding to a concern or complaint of child abuse, and ensuring concerns and complaints are taken seriously;
- (g) performing the responsibilities of the Head of Entity under for mandatory reporting; and
- (h) providing assurance to the Board that identified risks to child safety have been appropriately assessed, managed and reported (including implementing risk treatments).

9.3 Child Safety Officer (CSO)

Child Safety Officers are responsible for:

- (a) championing child safety;
- (b) assessing the risk of child abuse and harm within their area of control and minimise any risk to the greatest extent possible;
- (c) ensuring risk management processes are in place and operating effectively;
- (d) educating Staff about the prevention and identification of child abuse and harm;
- (e) reporting any risks to child safety to the Principal, and facilitating the reporting of any misconduct, inappropriate behaviour or suspected abuse pursuant to the Procedure;
- (f) helping coordinate responses to child safety and wellbeing incidents;
- (g) overseeing investigations of complaints and disclosures of child abuse and harm, as directed by the Principal; and
- (h) supporting Staff, Volunteers and others in the community to maintain a child safe School Environment, including by listening, discussing and clarifying issues in relation to child safety.

9.4 All Staff

All Staff have a responsibility to prevent, identify and mitigate risks related to child safety and wellbeing, and must:

- (a) promote child safety and wellbeing at all times, and provide a safe School Environment for children and students;
- (b) read and comply with this Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- (c) respond to all reports, allegations, complaints, concerns and disclosures of child abuse and harm, or a risk of child abuse or harm, seriously, in a child-focused manner, with sensitivity and professionalism;
- (d) be observant and report any concerns about actual, suspected or risk of child abuse or harm as soon as possible in accordance with the Procedure;
- (e) report any breach or suspected breach of this Policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct in accordance with the Policy and Procedure as soon as possible;
- (f) cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by the School, Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP), Tasmanian Police, law enforcement authorities, or other relevant regulatory bodies, including the Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania where appropriate.
- (g) create and maintain records of all reportable allegations, complaints, concerns, disclosures, safety incidents, risks, decisions and all actions taken as required by the School's Recordkeeping obligations; and
- (h) providing support for children at risk or where an allegation, complaint or disclosure has been made.

9.5 Staff are strongly encouraged to report child safety concerns to a CSO as soon as possible.

9.6 A Staff member who holds a significant concern for the safety or wellbeing of a child or student, or believes on reasonable grounds that a child or student is in need of protection from child abuse:

- (a) may disclose that information to Tasmania Police or the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP); and
- (b) is strongly encouraged to tell the School (by submitting an *Incident Report Form* as per the Procedure or telling a CSO).

9.7 Volunteers and Visitors

Volunteers and visitors are responsible for:

- (a) promote child safety and wellbeing at all times, and provide a safe School Environment for children and students;
- (b) read and comply with this Policy, Procedure and the Code;
- (c) be familiar with their legal obligations with respect to reporting child abuse;
- (d) be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse;

- (e) raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with a CSO or the Principal.

10 Culturally Safe Environments

- 10.1 We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people, the cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. The strategies and actions the School will take to create and maintain a culturally safe environment include:
- (a) respecting and valuing the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued;
 - (b) promoting community participation to value diversity and inclusiveness
 - (c) priding ourselves on providing a space where all individuals can feel safe to engage, learn and build connections;
 - (d) supporting and respecting all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers;
 - (e) supporting the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal students, their families and communities by encouraging applications (for employment and enrolment) from Aboriginal peoples;
 - (f) recognising the importance of Aboriginal culture, identity and safety in our child safe approach, responses to disclosures and in the development of our curriculum;
 - (g) ensuring Aboriginal students and their community have a voice by providing a safe space to be heard;
 - (h) equipping staff, students, volunteers and the Board to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students, through training as part of onboarding and induction and professional development;
 - (i) collaborating with local indigenous groups to work to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan;
 - (j) having measures in place to ensure racism is recognised, opposed and under no circumstances tolerated (see the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy). Any instances of racism within the School environment are addressed with serious and appropriate consequences (see the Behaviour Management Policy).
- 10.2 We want students, children and young people to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers.

11 Organisational Leadership

- 11.1 The MSA Board is ultimately responsible for ensuring child safety within the School. The MSA Board takes this responsibility incredibly seriously. The MSA Board ensures child safety at the School with the following strategies:
- (a) this Policy is publicly available on the MSA website, as is our Commitment to child safety;
 - (b) child safety is a standard item on MSA internal teacher monthly meetings related to any student operations or interactions – minutes are stored electronically and circulated to staff to review after each meeting;
 - (c) child safety is a standard agenda item on all MSA Board meetings– minutes are stored electronically and circulated to board members after each meeting;
 - (d) the Principal and CSO report to the MSA Board on child safety matters, including any risks identified specific to the School's environment, activities to be conducted and the characteristics of students, and risk controls and treatments implemented;
 - (e) the Principal and CSO are responsible for monitoring compliance with this Child Safety Policy and the Reporting Procedure;
 - (f) in circumstances where a complaint or concern is about the Principal, the Chair of the Board will assume all duties and responsibilities with respect to the complaint or concern as set out in this Child Safety Policy and the Reporting Procedure;
 - (g) staff and Board members participate in regular and ongoing online and face to face training around the topic of Child Safety, including PD days which feature interactive training opportunities;
 - (h) child safety is embedded into the staff induction and onboarding procedures;
 - (i) CSOs conduct PD Session throughout the year at staff PD days- attendance records are maintained electronically; and
 - (j) the School conducts performance reviews every six months, and child safe behaviour and conduct is monitored as part of these reviews. However, the School will not wait for the performance review date to address any allegations, speculations, or reports pertaining to that staff member and a child safety concern. Staff are continuously reviewed, both informally and formally.

12 Child Risk Management

- 12.1 MSA maintains a proactive and preventative approach to managing risks to child safety. The school undertakes regular risk assessments and implements controls to address known and foreseeable risks to children.

- (a) All school activities, including incursions, excursions, online learning, and onsite events, are subject to child safety risk assessments.
- (b) Risk assessments identify potential sources of harm and outline strategies to prevent, reduce, or respond to those risks.
- (c) Child safety considerations are embedded into broader risk management and operational planning processes.
- (d) Risks are reviewed periodically and after any incidents, complaints or concerns relating to child safety.
- (e) Risk assessments are documented and retained in accordance with the school's records management procedures.

13 Child and Student Empowerment

13.1 The school recognises children, and young people, are vital and active participants in our school. The School empowers children by:

- (a) taking into consideration the opinions of children and young people and use their opinions to develop child safety policies and procedures;
- (b) taking into consideration the age and literacy of our students and community in developing our procedures to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse;
- (c) advising students how to access sexual abuse prevention programs, through engagement with wellbeing sessions, curriculum and teaching and student voice programs;
- (d) providing students with a safe space in which they can communicate and express their views in order to raise awareness or their concerns;
- (e) giving students onsite access to wellbeing support and ensuring students are aware support is available if they are feeling unsafe, for example, protect posters are displayed in prominent places throughout School;
- (f) informing students of their rights and their responsibilities;
- (g) through training, encouraging staff and Volunteers to facilitate participation and be responsive to the input of children and students;
- (h) giving students the skills to recognise unsafe situations and the confidence to speak up about worries relating to themselves or others;
- (i) reinforcing connections between students, Staff and Volunteers; and
- (j) promoting student friendships and peer support to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing wellbeing in the curriculum and our student Code of Conduct.

14 Family Engagement

- 14.1 Families and the community are welcome to contribute to policies and procedures, they play a vital role to monitor and promote child safety through supporting awareness and expressing concerns. The School encourages families to provide feedback on any organisational policy or procedure.
- 14.2 The school provides opportunities for parents and families to contribute through surveys, emails and newsletters. The School also informs families, carers and the school community about the operations and governance of the School related to child safety and wellbeing, partly through this Policy, and through communication such as shared news via the school's fortnightly newsletter and MSA parent lounge on Facebook.
- 14.3 The CSO:**
- (a) communicates with parents/caregivers to provide information in an accessible and respectful manner;
 - (b) will engage in conversations with families and external organisations who may need to be informed in relation to student safety; and
 - (c) facilitates parents and carers being involved in decision about their child in all circumstances where decisions are made related to child safety and wellbeing which affects their child.
- 14.4 We also make our Child Safety Reporting Procedure and Complaints Policy publicly available on the School's website so our community understand the procedure for making complaints or raising concerns related to child safety.

15 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- 15.1 The school is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all children and young people. We value diversity in all its forms and actively promote the participation, safety, and empowerment of students from all backgrounds, with particular attention to those who may be more vulnerable.
- 15.2 The School and all staff:
- (a) Promote the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
 - (b) Promote the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
 - (c) Promote the safety, participation, and inclusion of children and young people with disabilities, and ensure they are supported to participate equally.
 - (d) Promote the safety and empowerment of LGBTIQ+ children and young people.

- (e) Pay particular attention to the needs and wellbeing of any child or young person who may be at heightened risk of harm or vulnerability due to personal, familial, or social circumstances.

16 Suitable Staff and Volunteers

16.1 Recruitment

All applicants for jobs that involve child-connected work for the school must be informed about the child safety practices of the school (including the Code of Conduct). MSA takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and young people. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety. MSA understands that, when recruiting Staff and Volunteers, we have ethical and legislative obligations including informed applicants of our Child Safety Code of Conduct. All position descriptions outline our commitment and expectations to child safety and the level of responsibility and supervision associated with the position.

Our advertisements for all roles include:

- (a) The job's requirements, duties, and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing;
- (b) The job occupant's essential or relevant qualification, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing;
- (c) All staff, Board members and volunteers will receive training on their information sharing and record keeping obligations. When engaging volunteers to undertake child-connected work, volunteers are made aware of the child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct of the school; and
- (d) The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy as a document is to be provided to school staff, members of MSA Board, and volunteers engaged in child-connected work as part of the induction process.

16.2 Ongoing Suitability

All Staff and Volunteers must have a Registration to Work with Vulnerable People or equivalent background check (i.e., a TRB). The school will request to sight, verify and record the RWVP, TRB or equivalent.

For child-related work (i.e., direct contact):

- (a) for Staff, the School will *always* collect and record proof of the person's identity, information about their qualification, the person's history of work involving children and references for the person's suitability.
- (b) for Volunteers or Staff engaged in work *without* direct contact, the School *may* collect and record this information.

16.3 Screening

- (a) We carry out reference checks prior to appointing new persons to ensure that we are recruiting suitable applicants. All recruitment documentation including but not limited to reference checks and copies of qualifications, Registration to Work with Vulnerable People are stored securely for evidence and compliance.
- (b) If the recruitment process indicates a person has a criminal history, the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.
- (c) All staff engaged in working with children or young people will be supervised appropriately to ensure conduct towards children and young people is safe and appropriate. Staff are monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability on an ongoing basis. We allocate coaches to teachers who, at times, sit in on their classes to support performance development from all angles.

16.4 Induction

- (a) All Staff, Volunteers and Board members are inducted into MSA and provided with appropriate information regarding our child safety processes and requirements. Part of a new employee and board member induction is that staff sign a declaration confirming they have read and understood School policies, including all child safety related policies and Codes.
- (b) This supports Staff to understand the nature and signs of abuse, including the definition of harm and the types of child abuse.
- (c) Induction includes information about our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Procedures for responding to complaints and concerns of child abuse.

16.5 Ongoing supervision

- (a) Ongoing supervision and people management of Staff and Volunteers focuses on child safety and wellbeing.
- (b) New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children and young people from abuse. This includes checking that their behaviour towards children and young people is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's *Code of Conduct* to understand appropriate behaviour further). This is not limited to the teaching team, anyone who interacts with a student will be assessed to ensure the School provides a safe environment for all students.

16.6 Code of Conduct and Behaviour Standards

All members of the school community must comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours when interacting with students.

- (a) The Code of Conduct applies to all staff, contractors, volunteers, and visitors.
- (b) It is communicated during induction and regularly reviewed.
- (c) Breaches of the Code are taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action or mandatory reporting to external authorities.
- (d) Students are provided with age-appropriate education on respectful behaviour and their right to feel safe.

17 Reporting Concerns or Disclosures

17.1 MSA is committed to ensuring that all concerns, disclosures, or allegations of child harm or abuse are acted upon with urgency, sensitivity, and in accordance with the law.

17.2 All staff, contractors, and volunteers must comply with Tasmania's mandatory reporting obligations under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas). This includes reporting suspected or actual abuse to the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line on 1800 000 123.

When you call 1800 000 123, please select:

- (a) **Option 1:** to report child abuse or neglect through the Child Safety Service
 - (b) **Option 2:** if a family needs support, or you are concerned about a child or young person's wellbeing but there is no imminent threat to their safety.
- 17.3 For detailed guidance on how to identify concerns, respond appropriately, and escalate matters, refer to the Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedure, which includes:
- (a) Mandatory reporting timeframes
 - (b) Internal reporting pathways and escalation
 - (c) The role of the Principal and other key personnel
 - (d) The HEARTS method for responding to disclosures
 - (e) Documentation and recordkeeping expectations

18 Complaint Processes

18.1 To make it clear how the School meets its child safety reporting obligations, we have a Child Safety Reporting Procedure, which is our procedure for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse.

- 18.2 We have a publicly available *Complaints Handling Policy* that is to help children and families understand how we will handle complaints, including child safety complaints. Our complaint-handling processes are child-focused and culturally safe.

18.3 How to make a complaint about child safety

- (a) Any person may make a complaint, raise a concern, identify a child safety risk or make a disclosure about an incident about child safety at the School to a School representative they trust, such as a Child Safety Officer, the Principal of the School or Chairperson of MSA Board.
- (b) The school representative may ask you for some details about the complaint, or ask you to put this in writing for our records.
- (c) The CSO is primarily responsible for resolving child safety complaints. These may be escalated to the Principal of the School or Chairperson of MSA Board.
- (d) All staff and volunteers are trained in the complaints handling process and understand the obligation to take all concerns that are raised with serious intent and provide a culturally safe environment. Any reportable obligations are to be immediately directed to the CSO.

18.4 Taken Seriously

- (a) MSA takes all complaints or concerns about child safety seriously and responds to these promptly and thoroughly.
- (b) We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. We also make records of our responses to these complaints and risk treatments. All records are securely stored online within the Compass (the School's student management) and any hard copies of documentation are shredded immediately following the upload to Compass. All shredding bins are locked and the contents securely disposed of through a service provider.
- (c) We work collaboratively with regulators and the police and may report concerns to relevant regulators. All reports of child abuse are reported to authorities as per the Child Safety Reporting Procedures.
- (d) If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children, young people and families on progress and any actions we take.

19 Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

- 19.1 Training and supervision are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility, not just Teachers.
- 19.2 A training register of attendance is maintained, for annual organisational training, including all staff and volunteers during professional development sessions relating to the following policies:
 - (a) Child Safe Policy;
 - (b) Child Safety Code of Conduct;

- (c) Child Safe Reporting Procedure;
- (d) Obligations of information sharing and record keeping; and
- (e) Complaints and Grievances.

19.3 Staff training

At MSA, we work with students who have a diverse range of circumstances. The School is registered as a specialist school therefore potential students and their parents/guardians are interviewed by the School's Principal, Assistant Principal before enrolment. The interviewing team are trained on how to provide support and respond to vulnerable students.

All Staff are trained to recognise and identify the indicators of abuse in students and children of all cultures. They are instructed on how to implement this Policy, the Code, the Reporting Procedure and inform the appropriate welfare staff members.

All staff are trained annually on:

- (a) identifying indicators of child abuse and harm;
- (b) how to support a person making a disclosure about harm to a child;
- (c) how to respond to issues of child safety including internal and external reporting requirements, notifying families and carers and managing risks to children;
- (d) how to support cultural safety;
- (e) recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students;
- (f) responding appropriately to concerns or disclosures relating to child safety and wellbeing, including supporting colleagues who report harm or abuse, in accordance with the School's Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures and the mandatory reporting requirements under Tasmanian legislation;
- (g) information sharing and recordkeeping obligations in accordance with relevant Tasmanian legislation, including the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas) and the School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting Procedure;
- (h) how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school's environment without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities;
 - (i) recognising types of child abuse, including:
 - (ii) grooming;
 - (iii) physical abuse and harm;
 - (iv) sexual abuse and sexual misconduct;

- (v) serious emotional and psychological abuse and harm; and
- (vi) serious neglect.

19.4 We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim of abuse and/or if they notice inappropriate behaviour. This is partly by sharing our Child Safety Reporting Procedure with the school community and having a CSO who is approachable and known in the community.

19.5 Child safe matters are regularly discussed in meetings and training is provided during annual Professional Development days. MSA deeply values ongoing development of our teaching staff. Staff receive training consistently throughout the year which is recorded and logged in a training register overseen by the Principal.

19.6 Volunteer training

The Principal determines what induction and training is suitable and appropriate to volunteers' roles and responsibilities at the School. The suitable and appropriate training for volunteers is training that supports volunteers to implement this policy and the school's other child safety strategies. The Principal must also consider whether or not it is reasonable and necessary to include training and information on guidance about how volunteers can contribute to building culturally safe environments for children and Students. While Board members are also volunteers, they have specific training requirements separately established by this Policy.

Training must consider the suitability and appropriateness of:

- (a) this Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- (b) how to recognise indicators of child abuse and harm (including harm caused by other children and students);
- (c) how to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm;
- (d) mandatory reporting obligations under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas).
- (e) how to facilitate child-friendly ways for children and students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns;
- (f) obligations they have relating to information sharing and recordkeeping; and
- (g) how to identify and manage child safety risks relevant to their role, without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

Volunteers are generally invited to attend Staff training and PD sessions.

19.7 Board training

The Board receives annual training on:

- (a) individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for child safety and managing the risk of child abuse;
- (b) child safety risks in the School Environment; and
- (c) MSA's policies, procedures and practices for child safety.

20 Child Safety in Physical and Online Environments

20.1 In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and young people in all School Environments.

20.2 Online safety

Teaching students about child safety risks in the online environment is embedded into educational curriculum and discussed with students in a safe and open classroom setting. Students and staff are exposed to information delivered by external experts in the field and provided with question time opportunities.

20.3 Physical environments

Staff must sign and adhere to the Code of Conduct, which incorporates use of devices in an online environment.

We have a risk management strategy in place to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks. This includes reviewing and acting on risks posed by physical environments, where applicable.

When procuring use of facilities and services from third parties, staff must consider how the safety and students and children will be ensured. Staff can speak to a CSO when arranging excursions for assistance.

21 Communication and Engagement with Families

21.1 We work in partnership with families to build a culture of child safety and ensure transparency and accountability.

- (a) Parents and carers are informed about the school's child safety policies, Code of Conduct, and reporting processes during enrolment and through ongoing communication.
- (b) The school encourages open communication and values feedback from families regarding student wellbeing and safety.
- (c) Families are provided with accessible avenues to raise concerns or complaints, and are supported through resolution processes.
- (d) Culturally safe and inclusive practices are adopted when communicating with families from diverse backgrounds.

- (e) Family engagement forms part of our preventative approach to child abuse and neglect.

22 Record Keeping and Confidentiality

- 22.1 Accurate and secure record-keeping is essential for protecting children and demonstrating compliance with child safety obligations.
- (a) All child safety concerns, disclosures, reports and risk assessments are documented and stored securely.
 - (b) Access to these records is restricted to authorised personnel only.
 - (c) Records are retained in line with the Archives Act 1983 (Tas) and other relevant legal requirements.
 - (d) Confidentiality is respected in all matters relating to child protection; however, information may be shared with external agencies if there is a legal obligation to do so.

23 Breach of Policy

- 23.1 Breaches of this Policy:
- (a) are not acceptable by any employee; and
 - (b) will be responded to promptly.

24 Review

This policy is reviewed periodically as detailed in the policy review schedule. The next review date is May 2027.

25 Communication

It is also readily available on the school's website and SharePoint site. This policy is made available to all staff during the onboarding and induction period.