## **Child Safety Policy**

## **Purpose**

Somers School Camp Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school’s commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school’s approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/Ministerial_Order.pdf) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone’s obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

## **Scope**

This policy:

* applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
* applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student’s use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
* should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

## **Definitions**

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards-definitions):

* child
* child safety
* child abuse
* child-connected work
* child-related work
* school environment
* school boarding environment
* school staff
* school boarding premises staff
* school governing authority
* school boarding premises governing authority
* student
* volunteer.

## **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY**

Somers School Camp is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child’s safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

### **Child safety principles**

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Somers School Camp 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 children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such concerns;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers

## **POLICY**

## **Strategies to embed a child safe culture**

Somers School Camp’s culture encourages staff, students, parents and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the [Child Safety Code of Conduct](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/Woorabindatemp/Shared%20Documents/06%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Child%20Safe%20Resources/Child%20Safe%20Code%20of%20Conduct%202021.docx), the school’s [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/Woorabindatemp/Shared%20Documents/06%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Child%20Safe%20Resources/Child%20Safety%20Responding%20and%20Reporting%20Obligations%20Policy%20and%20Procedures%202021.docx), [*Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf) are readily available online and in hard copy at the school’s administration office for all staff and students to read at any time.

Child safety is everyone’s responsibility. **All school staff** are required to:

* Act in accordance with the school’s Child Safety Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
* Act in accordance with the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf) where necessary
* Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety
* Act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
  + Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
  + Duty of care (applies to all school staff)
  + Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses)
  + Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
  + Reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch)
  + Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)
  + For more information on these obligations, see [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf).

As part of Somers School Camp’s child safe culture, **school leadership** (including the principal and assistant principals) will:

* Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when implementing the Child Safe Standards
* Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings
* Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse
* Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegation.

As part of Somers School Camp’s child safe culture, **school mandatory reporting staff** are required to:

* Complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](http://elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/) online module every year
* Read the school’s Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
* Read the school’s Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
* Read the school’s Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of Somers School Camp’s child safe culture, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school councils and school council members** will:

* Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
* Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards
* Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the [Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/school-council-training.pptx).
* Approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes
* When hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the principal).

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school’s Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

* School Leadership is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 3 years.
* School Leadership is responsible for monitoring the school’s compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach the Principal if they have any concerns about the school’s compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
* School Leadership is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
* Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Somers School Camp’s other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

## **Recruitment**

Somers School Camp follows the Department’s Recruitment in Schools guide to ensure child safe recruitment practices, available on the [Department’s website](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/careers/Pages/recruitinsch.aspx).

All prospective volunteers are required to comply with our school’s Volunteers Policy, including in relation to assessing the suitability of prospective volunteers and obtaining checks required under this policy.

## **Training and supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the school understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training occurs annually or more often as required

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the school, including by being referred to the Child Safety Policy (this document), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website. In addition all new employees, contractors and volunteers are required to read and sign the school’s Child Safe Code of Conduct upon arrival to the school.

They will also be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school’s commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported by school staff to the Principal or Assistant Principal and will be managed in accordance with Somers School Camp’s [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/Woorabindatemp/Shared%20Documents/06%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Child%20Safe%20Resources/Child%20Safety%20Responding%20and%20Reporting%20Obligations%20Policy%20and%20Procedures%202021.docx) where required.

## **Reporting a child safety concern or complaint**

The school has clear expectations for all staff, visiting teachers and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff (including school council employees) must follow the school’s Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf) if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Somers School Camp will never prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school’s [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/Woorabindatemp/Shared%20Documents/06%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Child%20Safe%20Resources/Child%20Safety%20Responding%20and%20Reporting%20Obligations%20Policy%20and%20Procedures%202021.docx). In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Somers School Camp will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures can be found at on the Directory.

## **Risk reduction and management**

Somers School Camp believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school’s risk assessment register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Somers School Camp monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions it takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety, more information can be found in the school’s risk assessment register.

## **Listening to, communicating with and empowering children**

Somers School Camp has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students can access information on how to report abuse at the school administration office.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant’s account and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

* All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents at Somers School Camp to read on our website and at the school’s administration office.
* PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
* The school website informs students and the school community about the school’s commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety
* The Four Critical Actions are actively taught to mandatory reporters and other school staff
* Age-appropriate discussion of child safety occurs with all students that attend the school

The school will use its health and wellbeing programs, including the Respectful Relationships initiative, to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

* standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
* healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
* resilience; and
* child abuse awareness and prevention.

## **Communications**

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

* Ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are available on the school website
* Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion
* Through the induction of visiting teachers, new staff and volunteers

## **Confidentiality and privacy**

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law and other relevant laws. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the Department of Education and Training’s [Schools’ Privacy Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx).

## **Related policies and documents**

Related policies and documents include:

* [Code of Conduct](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/Woorabindatemp/Shared%20Documents/06%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Child%20Safe%20Resources/Child%20Safe%20Code%20of%20Conduct%202021.docx)
* [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/Woorabindatemp/Shared%20Documents/06%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Child%20Safe%20Resources/Child%20Safety%20Responding%20and%20Reporting%20Obligations%20Policy%20and%20Procedures%202021.docx)
* [Somers School Camp Risk assessment register](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/sites/Woorabindatemp/Shared%20Documents/06%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Child%20Safe%20Resources/Child%20Safety%20Risk%20Register%202021.docx)
* [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf)
* [Four Critical Actions for Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf)
* [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Schoolstemplate.pdf)
* [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/SSO_Policy.pdf)
* [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_SSO.pdf)
* [Policy and Advisory Library – Duty of Care](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/dutyofcare.aspx)
* [Policy and Advisory Library – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotectobligation.aspx)
* [Schools’ Privacy Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx).

## **Policy evaluation and review**

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 3 years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

**Approval**

School Principal: Mark Warner

Dated: 17/6/2022

Date of next review: June 2025