

## Vision

At Tanjil South Primary School, the child safe environments policy: sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards

## Scope

This policy will apply to school staff, volunteers and contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people, across a range of school forums such as camps, excursions, online and outside of school hours.

## Statement of commitment to child safe standards

Tanjil South Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This commitment will be the primary focus of our decision-making processes, and in the care of our students. Tanjil South Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Tanjil South Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people *are* safe, *feel* safe, and their voices are heard regarding decisions which affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability and the safety of vulnerable children.

Every person involved with Tanjil South Primary 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.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Tanjil South Primary School will:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children, and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- 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;
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities; Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations when the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk;
- Value the input of, and communicate regularly with, families and carers.

### **Our Children**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that vulnerable children safe and can participate equally

### **Our Staff and Volunteers**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

## **Training and supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our 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 discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

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

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

## **Recruitment**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website ([www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)) for further information

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment. If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Recruitment procedures for Tanjil South Primary School, as they pertain to Child Safe Standards, are outlined in the TSPS Staff Selection Policy.

## **Fair Procedures for Personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form<sup>1</sup>, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

## **Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

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Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

### Legislative responsibilities

Our school takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- All Victorian Teachers have a legal responsibility to report incidents where children's safety is at risk. Victorian Government School employees are expected to follow the DET Mandatory Reporting policy which can be found at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>
- This applies to allegations of disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, school staff, visitors or other persons connected to the school environment.
- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our school will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

### Risk management

In Victoria, schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in schools on social media).

The risk management strategies for Tanjil South Primary School, as they pertain to Child Safe Standards, as outlined in the TSPS Risk Assessment Policy.

### Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)

- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed<sup>2</sup>
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

### Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability and vulnerable children.

### Policy and procedures

Policies and procedures outlining Tanjil South Primary School's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below. For further information, please contact the school's Principal.

A child-safe culture	Tanjil South Primary School's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.
Personnel understand their Roles and Responsibilities and Code of Conduct	School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and expected behaviour in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct. The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Refer to the <a href="#">'Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Teachers Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics'</a> .
Human Resources Practices and Training	Tanjil South Primary School applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with our students. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo a National Criminal History Records check, and maintain a valid Working with Children Check. Further details can be found in the Tanjil South Primary School Staff Selection Policy.
Reporting a child safety concern or complaint	Tanjil South Primary school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection Agency/Department or other appropriate agency, and notifying the

	<p>principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take actions to respond to a complaint. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (DET Mandatory Reporting policy which can be found at <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx</a>)</p> <p>Further details can be found in the Tanjil South Primary School Mandatory Reporting Policy.</p>
Risk Reduction and Management	<p>The school believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures in accordance with the schools Risk Assessment Policy. <a href="#">Located in the school Administration User Drive / Child Safe / Child Safe Standard 6- Risk Assessment Policy</a></p>
Listening to children	<p>The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment which involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/caregivers. We encourage child and parent/caregiver involvement and engagement that will inform safe school operations, and build the capability of children and parents/caregivers to understand their rights and responsibilities. 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 of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.</p>
Confidentiality and Privacy	<p>Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of information about children and their families. Policies regarding the appropriate collection, use and storage of information have been developed and are enforced by the school. This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the School Privacy Policy: <a href="https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx#link6">https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx#link6</a></p>
Breaches	<p>Breaches of Duty of Care and Mandatory Reporting Obligations are identified in the specific policies. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the wider community.</p>

## Policy evaluation and review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of the school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.

## Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at

[www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes) Child abuse includes

- Any act committed against a child involving –
  - a sexual offence or
  - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- The infliction, on a child, of-
  - Physical violence or
  - Serious emotional or psychological harm
  - Serious neglect of a child

**Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

**School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events)

**School staff** means: In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
- employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

## Related policies and Documents

School Policy Advisory Guide – Duty of Care

School Policy Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations

DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

<b>Author</b>	Robert Tinker	<b>Version number</b>	Version 1
<b>Approved By</b>	School Council	<b>Date implemented</b>	___/___/___ DD / MM / YYYY
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Signature _____ DD / MM / YYYY		
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Principal		
<b>Review Date</b>	November 2019		