

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 1: STRATEGIES TO EMBED AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY

Guidance for schools in developing their response

Child Safe Standard 1 (Standard 1) requires schools to plan, implement and review strategies that will embed a culture of child safety. Standard 1 provides part of the overarching framework for all the Standards, alongside Standard 2 which requires a policy or commitment to child safety. This guide outlines what is required of schools for compliance with Ministerial Order 870 and provides further advice on effective strategies and practices within a school to embed an organisational culture of child safety.

Governance arrangements, underpinned by a firm commitment from school leadership to a school's values and standards are the starting point to embedding a culture of child safety. Strategies that seek to prevent harm and neglect (including physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, racial and cultural or religious abuse) all contribute to a child safe culture. It is therefore critical that child safety is part of the everyday thinking and practice of all within the school community. It is important to maintain the momentum of a child safe culture by monitoring performance and checking that child safety continues to be prominent in the school's governance and planning.

In preparing for compliance schools are expected to:

- **Review** the school's child safe practices across each of the Standards and identify priorities.
- **Address** gaps and priorities by developing an Action Plan, including allocating responsibilities to school leaders for completing the actions. This may include looking at what examples of evidence schools may already have to demonstrate compliance. See: [Action Plan Template](#).
- **Determine** timeframes for meeting gaps identified. This will include allowing time for new policies or procedures to be considered and approved by the school governing authority.

In preparing for compliance schools are encouraged to:

- **Update** their school statement of philosophy and values to acknowledge the importance of child safety and protecting children from abuse.
- **Create** a child safety officer/leader position or role in the school to promote the Action Plan and review and report on its delivery. Key activities of a school child safety officer/leader role are provided. See: [Key Activities of a School Child Safety Officer/Leader Role](#).
- **Conduct** briefing sessions for school staff members to ensure a high degree of awareness of the Standards and school strategies.

BACKGROUND

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015* to introduce seven child safe standards (the Standards) into law. The Standards apply to all organisations involved in child-related work in Victoria.

[Ministerial Order No. 870](#) provides the framework for how schools will be required to comply with the Standards. Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance rests with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

The Ministerial Order specifies the following requirements for schools regarding Standard 1:

"The school governing authority must:

- (a) develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school;*
- (b) allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies;*
- (c) inform the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities;*
- (d) put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices; and*
- (e) periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies."*

SUSTAINING AND IMPROVING THE SCHOOL'S CHILD SAFETY CULTURE

The Ministerial Order identifies five elements of the Standard 1 requirement, including developing strategies, allocating roles and responsibilities, informing the school community, putting the strategies into practice, and periodic review. If a school is satisfied that its culture of child safety meets or exceeds the minimum standard in the Ministerial Order, the school needs to ensure that it can demonstrate the strength of its organisational culture to the VRQA.

If a school is not sure whether it meets the minimum standard, some indicators of good practice and good practice advice is outlined below. The specific 'good practices' are suggestions, and are not compulsory or exhaustive.

Schools are encouraged to be innovative when building or improving its culture and organisation.

DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO EMBED A CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY AT THE SCHOOL

Indicator of good practice

- Members of the school community (teachers, parents, students, etc) feel empowered to discuss child safety and raise any concerns about child abuse.

Good practices

- Effective governance arrangements are in place to authorise and agree on strategies.
- Embed the goal of child safety in school documentation to convey the vision, mission and strategic direction of the school in relation to child safety.

- Recognise the diverse needs of children in the school. For example, it is important that schools are inclusive and culturally safe places for children and parents. Importantly, some children (e.g. young children, children with a disability) are at greater risk of abuse or exploitation and need greater levels of supervision and support.
- Include child safety as a standing item on Leadership Team and Staff Meeting agendas.

ALLOCATE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ACHIEVING THE STRATEGIES

Indicator of good practice

- Key people have appropriate skills and capacity to undertake child safety roles and responsibilities. This includes teachers and school leaders and also extends to support staff, student counsellors, business managers of contracted service providers who work with or near school children. For further information on what a child safety role may involve, see: Key Activities of a School Child Safety Officer/Leader role.

Good practices

- School-based roles and responsibilities for child safety are known and understood across the school community.
- Make sure students, school staff, and members of the school community know who to contact if they have a concern about child safety in the school. Make sure this information is kept up to date, and is accessible to all.
- Build capability by:
 - making training available in relation to key responsibilities
 - including responsibilities in position descriptions or as part of staff development processes
 - providing ongoing induction and training for all staff and volunteers in child safety including how to recognise and respond to child abuse.

INFORM THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ABOUT THE STRATEGIES AND ALLOCATED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Indicator of good practice

- Child safety is a core part of the school's public and internal communication.

Good practices

- The school's communications about the child safety strategies:
 - identifies key people and roles
 - covers the roles of all people in the school community
 - covers the range of school environments (e.g. camps, online)
 - uses a mix of communication tools (verbal, online, print).

- Provide opportunities for staff, students, parents and the school community to engage with child safety (e.g. community forums).

PUT THE STRATEGIES INTO PRACTICE, AND INFORM THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ABOUT THESE PRACTICES

Indicator of good practice:

- Keep the school community updated about the school's progress in putting strategies into practice, changing strategies or developing new strategies.

Good practices:

- Child safety champions – one or more roles in the school with responsibility to promote, monitor and/or report on the implementation of the school's child safety strategies (with appropriate leadership support).
- Report progress to the school governing authority.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for staff, students, parents and the school community to engage with child safety issues (e.g. community forums).

PERIODICALLY REVIEW THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STRATEGIES PUT INTO PRACTICE AND, IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, REVISE THOSE STRATEGIES

Indicator of good practice:

- There is a system (including schedule, roles and reporting) for periodic review (e.g. every two years) and improvement of child safety related policies and practices.

Good practices:

- Proactively planning the school's approach to review, including governance oversight.
- Consult with staff, and the wider school community to inform strategic decisions about child safety.
- Consider continuous improvement opportunities such as incorporating child safety questions in existing surveys to measure awareness and confidence in the school's approach.
- Conduct a review after a potential risk or report occurs in the school.
- Outcomes of all reviews are communicated.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Victorian Government, Education & Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, January 2016, *Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools*, Ministerial Order No. 870.
- Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (2016) *Information Sheet. CHILD SAFETY STANDARD 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety.*
- Commission for Children and Young People (2015) *A Guide For Creating A Child Safe Organisation*, Version 2.0.

- A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST
- Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations - elearning module
- State of Victoria (2010) *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people: A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children's Services and Victorian School*