



PROVIDING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Purpose and Background

All children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that promotes opportunities to thrive with adults who safeguard and advocate for their health, safety, security and wellbeing including the right to:

- be asked to express their views and wishes about matters affecting their lives and to have those views appropriately considered by adults;
- feel and be safe in their interactions with adults and other children and young people; and
- understand, as early as possible, what is meant by 'feeling and being safe'

Mansfield Steiner School recognises the importance of child safety and understands the Child Safe Standards that have been introduced in Victoria to keep children safe from harm and abuse. On November 13, 2013, the Victorian Parliament tabled the report of its Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations (the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry). The report provided 15 recommendations, including the introduction of minimum standards for ensuring child-safe organisations.

The following 7 Child Safe Standards are embedded into the service's practice:

1. Embedding a culture of child safety through effective leadership
2. Making a commitment to child safety with a policy/ies or statement/s
3. Having a clear code of conduct that establishes appropriate behaviour with children
4. Screening, supervision and training for staff, to reduce the risk of child abuse
5. Clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. Identifying child abuse risks and ways to reduce them
7. Empowering children to share their feedback and experiences about feeling safe

Strategies

The physical Environment

To promote a safe physical environment, we will:

- Ensure all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards

- Remove, repair or replace worn and damaged buildings, structures equipment and resources which may provide a safety risk for children in a timely manner
- Ensure learning environments are established that provide appropriate child groupings, sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment (National Regulation 103)
- Organise indoor and outdoor spaces to ensure risks to the health and safety are minimised and that there is effective and adequate supervision available at all times (National Regulation 115)
- Conduct regular risk assessments of the service environment to determine any risks to children's health and safety
- Analyse and evaluate the risks associated with identified hazards
- Determine appropriate ways to eliminate or control identified hazards
- Review risk assessments after any serious incident report is made to the Regulatory Authority.

Staffing and Supervision

- Ensure sufficient numbers of educators are employed to ensure adequate supervision of children at all times (National Regulation 123, 130-132, 271-272)
- Manage rosters to not only ensure that adequate numbers of educators are on duty to meet ratio and qualification requirements (National Regulation 126) but that duty of care implications are considered to ensure adequate supervision at all times
- Ensure screening and suitability of staff, volunteers as per the legislation and policy at the time of employment and as part of an ongoing process
- Respond proactively to emerging staff performance concerns

Child Protection

All staff, educators and volunteers of our service are Mandatory Reporters and are required to report to relevant authorities as per the Child Protection Policy if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and have current concern about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child.

All educators must undertake the Mandatory Reporting ChildSafe Standards Training, at least annually, in order to effectively:

- Make appropriate responses to all disclosures of abuse and any allegation of abuse against staff members of the service
- understand their responsibilities and procedures under child protection legislation
- be able to recognise the factors that increase a child's vulnerability to maltreatment
- be aware of the vulnerabilities which may indicate a need to assess, monitor or curtail the behaviour of individuals in relation to children and young people within organisations

This Policy is to be read and implemented in conjunction with Mansfield Steiner School's Child Protection Reporting Procedures.

Responsibilities of the Approved Provider

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations with regard to the delivery and collection of children at all times (National Regulation 99)
- Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development
- Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor and staff members at the service who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (National Regulation 84)
- Ensure that all responsible persons on the service have up to date child protection training (National Law 162)
- Ensure that all relevant staff and educators working with children have working with children check (or equivalent, such as VIT Registration) and have been cleared (Child Protection Act 9)
- Ensure that at least one person at the service holds asthma, anaphylaxis and first aid training at all times (National Regulation 136)
- Ensure that policies and procedures are up to date and reflecting the National Regulations (National Regulation 168)
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the policies and procedures of the service and that a copy of these are available for all visitors, families, students and staff of the service at all times

Responsibilities of the Nominated Supervisor

- Provide all staff and educators working directly with children with a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures to assist them in their reporting responsibilities
- Ensure screening and suitability processes are maintained to meet policy and legislative requirements
- Identify and provide appropriate resources and training to assist staff, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy
- Keep up to date and comply with relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy
- Co-operate with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families
- Ensure families are made aware of support services available to them and of the assistance these services can provide
- Ensure all staff who work with children are supported to implement this policy in the service
- Protect the rights of children and families and encourage their participation in decision-making at the service

Responsibilities of the Educators

- Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy
- Raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people's safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the site/service
- Keep up to date and comply with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy
- Follow all record keeping requirements (National Regulation 173, 177)

- Undertaking appropriate training and education on child protection
- Identify any potential for risk and harm to a child at the service and develop and implement effective prevention strategies in consultation with the approved provider and the nominated supervisor
- Co-operate with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families
- Inform families of support services available to them (such as child first), and of the assistance these services can provide
- Ensure that no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, visitor, volunteer, student or parent/guardian at the service
- Implementing the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse
- Notify the Nominated Supervisor or the Approved Provider immediately upon becoming aware of any concerns, complaints or allegations regarding the health, safety and welfare of a child at the service
- Offer support to the child and their family, and to other staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at the service
- Provide a quiet place for children to rest when they are tired or stressed (National Regulation 81)
- Maintain confidentiality at all times (National Regulation 181)
- Adhere to all service policies and procedures

Responsibilities of the Families

- Read and comply with this policy
- Report any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor

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Related Statutory Obligations & Considerations

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)
<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013 Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- Child Safe Standards for Providers DHHS - <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>
- Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) - http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-FrameworkResourcesKit/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Related Policies & Procedures

Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy

Child Protection Policy & Procedures

Code of Conduct (for Staff Members) Policy

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

AUTHORISATION & NEXT POLICY REVIEW

This policy was adopted, upon review, by Mansfield Steiner School & Kindergarten on 30th Aug 2022.

This policy will be reviewed on (annually, from above date), or prior to this date if circumstances prompt a policy review.

Name of Approved Provider (or representative): Glen Hood



Signature of Approved Provider (or representative): _____

Date: 30th Aug 2022