

NHS CHILD SAFE STANDARDS POLICY AND STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT, 2016

25/10/2016



Rationale:

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have a child safe policy or a statement of commitment to child safety.

Aims:

This child safe standards policy is a statement of commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse and child safety at Nossal High School. It articulates our commitment to keep children safe from harm. It forms the foundation of the school's procedures, practices, decision making processes, and ultimately the school culture with respect to child safety.

This policy will be openly and transparently shared throughout the school community.

Policy:

Our Commitment to Child Safety:

- Nossal High School (NHS) is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations (see NHS Mandatory Reporting and NHS Duty of Care Policies) to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- NHS is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- NHS has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers in accordance with DET recruitment policy.
- NHS is committed to regularly training and educating our staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff, School Council, contractors and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our children:

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in NHS. 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 NHS, 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 children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors

- This policy guides our staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors on how to behave with children in NHS.
- All of our staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors must agree to abide by our Child Safe Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.
- All staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors, 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 NHS understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

- NHS culture aims for all our staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors (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, School Council, volunteers, and contractors to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.
- We also support our staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.
- New employees, Council members, contractors and volunteers will be supervised and educated regularly to ensure they understand NHS'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 (please refer to NHS's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).
- 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 follow the DET recruitment policies which outline that all staff and volunteers must have either VIT registration (teachers) which requires a Criminal Record Check, or a Working with Children's Check (ESS and volunteers).
- NHS will also seek proof of identity and qualifications, history of work and references for those who are involved with work directly with students.
- NHS understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

Fair procedures for personnel

- The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern.

- We are fair and just to all personnel.
- The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence and in accordance with procedures outlined in our published Responding to Incidents guidelines.
- We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.
- If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

- All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, contractors, School Council, 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.
- 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

NHS takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **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 NHS will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to report, reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

Risk management

- NHS takes steps 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 and included these in our OHS Risk Register.
- 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, spaces with windows), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child on social media unless it forms part of the curriculum and is through school-sanctioned channels).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

- NHS takes all allegations seriously and has procedures in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly.
- Our staff, School Council, volunteers, and contractors are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.
We work to ensure all children, families, staff, School Council, contractors 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 (see information about failure to disclose above).

- If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident to NHS's Child Safety Officer, the Principal or their delegate.
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
 - someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
 - observing suspicious behaviour.
- NHS will complete detailed reports (see Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template) of all reports of suspected child abuse, our response and retain and archive them appropriately.
- NHS will put in place support procedures for all school members associated with the reports of child abuse.

Implementation:

This policy is for explicit use:

- as part of induction training for new leadership members, staff, School Council, contractors and volunteers
- as part of refresher training for existing leadership members, staff, School Council, contractors and volunteers
- to inform parents/carers and other persons associated with the organisation of the behaviour they can expect from the organisation's leadership, staff and volunteers
- to support and inform organisational protocols and reporting procedures should breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct be suspected or identified.

The school environment refers to:

- 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) a campus of the school;
 - b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
 - c) 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).

Links and Appendices:

Ministerial Order 870: <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/ChSafMINOrder8702.pdf>

VRQA Resources: <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/resources.html>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

Evaluation:

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.

This policy is available on the following platforms:

Blackboard Drive> Policies>Final and published on our school website

Date Implemented	25 October 2016
Author	HAR
Approved By	Nossal High School Council
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	
Date Reviewed	25th July 2017
Responsible for Review	Principal team
Review Date	July Meeting 2018
References	Ministerial Order 870: http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/ChSafMINOrder8702.pdf VRQA Resources: http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/resources.html http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx