



## Child Safety Policy

### Purpose

The Northern School for Autism 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](#) (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](#):

- 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.

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## Statement of commitment to child safety

Northern School for Autism 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 promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

The school's approach to creating and maintaining a child safe school environment is guided by our acceptance of the universal values –

*Every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive.*

*Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.*

At Northern School for Autism our values guide the decision and behaviours of all member of our school community including in relation to child safety:

-  Trust
-  Understanding
-  Safety

We **trust** ourselves, our school and each other to implement a teaching and learning program that builds on our strengths.

Our community **understands** the importance to support us by providing an inclusive environment where we can thrive.

Our school provides us a **safe** learning environment where we can practice behaviours that help us become valued members of the community.

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.

Northern School for Autism has **zero tolerance of child abuse**, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

- Our updated School Strategic Plan will contain statements about the school's commitment to developing a child safe culture.
- Our Child Safe Code of Conduct lists acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours.
- We have child safe policies to identify, remove or reduce, and respond to suspected child abuse.
- Where applicable, all our policies have the objective of having in place strategies to enhance our child safety standards.
- Our school policies consistently affirm that the safety and wellbeing of children is a high priority for Northern School for Autism.
- Where possible, we choose to use the term "child" rather than "student".

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, queer, questioning and asexual (LGBTIQA+) 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.

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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, the Northern School for Autism 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.
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

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

The Northern School for Autism's culture encourages staff, students, parents/carers 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 Safe Code of Conduct, the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, [\*Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools\*](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online and in hard copy at NSA Administration Offices for all staff and students to read at any time.

#### **School leadership team**

Our school leadership team (comprising the principal, assistant principals and leading teachers) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and assistant principals will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

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- 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.

### **School staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct <https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols> , which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures <https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols> , including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.
- 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](#).

### **School council**

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety,
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe “At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy”
- 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

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

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## Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Northern School for Autism has nominated the Principal as the child safety champion to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

Child safety champions work with the school leadership team, teachers, students, volunteers and the school community to create a child safe environment.

Our principal as the child safety champion is the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#).

These key responsibilities are:

- Promote child safety culture
- Provide support and guidance
- Train and educate
- Monitor, review and report

In addition to these roles, our child safety champion will:

### PROVIDE AUTHORITATIVE ADVICE

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
- Liaise with the school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety.
- Lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and, with the assistance of the Leadership Team, provide coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

### RAISE AWARENESS

- Ensure the school's policies are known and used appropriately.
- Ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
- Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

### TRAIN

- Being authoritative in providing advice by:
- Keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training
- Having a working knowledge of how the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
- Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.

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- Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff. (Staff Administration Manual, Induction, Staff Meetings and Briefings)
- Make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DFFH and DET policies and guidance.

Our Leadership Team monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

### **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct <https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols> also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

### **Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

### **Establishing a culturally safe environment**

At Northern School for Autism, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- a child or student's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported
- staff, students, volunteers, and the school community are equipped to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal students
- measures are in place to ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated, and any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences
- active support for the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal children and students and their families

### **Strategies and actions to promote cultural safety:**

- acknowledging the existing knowledge of Koorie students and their families and seeking their feedback on decisions that affect them, and on how well we are meeting their needs, through initial enrolment meetings, Student Support Groups, during the development of Individual Education Plans.
- working with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) for advice on how we can create a culturally inclusive learning environment and to build our capacity to provide support for individual Koorie students attending our school
- ensuring that all Koorie students have individual education plans developed in partnership with students, families, and KESOs. partnering with the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people to seek feedback and advice

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on existing and new actions we can take to support the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal students and children in our community.

- staff participate in Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST) training
- provide tailored training and professional development each year to build knowledge for specific staff based on any emerging or current areas of need
- ensure training and professional development equips teaching staff to deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the classroom curriculum
- ensure training and professional development equips staff with an understanding and appreciation of the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Koorie children and students.
- Develop a resource bank of digital, hardcopy print and other artefacts that support the inclusion of Aboriginal content across the curriculum.
- Use the [Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026](#) to guide the school's support for Aboriginal self-determination.
- implementing the Department of Education and Training's Koorie Education Policy
- Put school leaders at the front of anti-racist action. Discuss racism and work to address unconscious bias and racism in the school community.
- Address racism from students, staff, volunteers or visitors directly. Make sure racist speech or actions are always dealt with, and the culture of the school works to prevent incidents from occurring.
- Encourage non-Aboriginal school leaders and teachers to commit to ways they can work as an effective ally to Aboriginal students, their families and communities.
- acknowledging Country and the Traditional Owners of the land at the start of every school assembly and meeting
- arranging Welcome to Country by local Elders at major school events such as the opening of new buildings or campuses
- arranging incursions and excursions, and recognising key events and anniversaries that celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture

## Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Northern School for Autism, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging and implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct and our school values.

We inform students of their rights through and our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.

Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice or communication device to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need.

Students can access information on how to report abuse from Protect Posters (aimed at students) that will be placed in student community areas and Child safety related discussions are held in classtime. Teachers will implement explicit teaching sessions to give students appropriate information to keep them safe.

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 on our website and at NSA Administration Offices.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school.

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- School newsletters will inform 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.
- As part of our Strategies to Promote the Participation and Empowerment of Children Policy, age-appropriate discussion of child safety issues with students is a feature of our child safe approach.
- NSA is using the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) resources, to deliver respectful relationships and resilience education to our students.
- As part of our Child Safety staff training/meetings mandatory reporters and other school staff are briefed on the Four Critical Actions.
- The whole school is encouraged to contribute to risk assessment and mitigation.

The school will use its health and wellbeing programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience (one of the school's prime values);
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

At Northern School for Autism teachers are delivering specific programs, including Bullystoppers, Respectful Relationships, sexuality education, and e-smart education programs. All programs are adapted to cater for individual communication and cognitive learning styles.

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

### **Family engagement**

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Northern School for Autism we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- through the school website, newsletters, other communications, school council, parent volunteer committees, student, staff, and parent meetings etc.
- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on the school website
- Newsletters will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- Acknowledge the important role that families and communities play in monitoring children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to disclose concerns.
- Promoting Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships education
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school

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## Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children and young people with communication and cognitive learning styles
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Equity is a state of fairness in which all children and young people can participate freely and equally in areas of life, regardless of their background, characteristics or beliefs. This means their safety is not dependent on their socio-economic, family or personal circumstances.

As part of this standard, Northern School for Autism will:

- support staff and volunteers to recognise and respond to students' diverse circumstances
- understand that some students are at higher risk of harm than others
- provide easy access to information
- adjust procedures to respond to different needs
- make sure complaints processes are child-friendly, culturally safe and easy to understand.
- Pay 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

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy <https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols> provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

## Suitable staff and volunteers

At Northern School for Autism, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

### Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education and Training's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)
- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management](#)

This provides comprehensive policy and information concerning recruitment in schools including the following:

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## ***Advertising***

- Ensure recruitment advertisements for staff in child connected work contain:
  - the job's requirements, including expected knowledge of child development appropriate to the role
  - an outline of duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing
  - essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing.
- Provide all job applicants with the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct and links to child safety resources.

## ***Screening***

- Include selection criteria relevant to the role, such as:
  - experience working with children, or particular groups of children, including children with a disability or Aboriginal children
  - engaging with families
  - child safety experience
  - cultural safety in their work.
- Screen all staff, volunteers, leaders and school governing board members for their suitability during recruitment.

## ***Interviews***

- Think carefully about who will be on the interview panel and ensure panel members have the right skills, experience and information to perform their role.
- Develop questions about child safety in job interviews.
- Seek referees for both staff and volunteers as appropriate, including their last employer, and overseas referees if they've worked overseas.
- Ask referees about the person's character and experience in working directly with children and young people.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - the person's history of working with children
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

## **Staff induction**

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- how to contribute to identifying, removing or reducing risks
- recordkeeping and information sharing requirements
- school values and philosophy
- procedures for managing complaints and concerns
- privacy and reporting protocols.
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

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## Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Post-Employment Supervision and Ongoing Training

- Principal, Assistant Principals and Leading Teachers will be consistently observing all staff
- New staff are provided with information about matters such as the philosophy, vision, mission and values of the school, curriculum, students with medical conditions, school policies, OH&S and routine matters e.g. yard duty requirements, during inductions.
- Undertake a risk assessment to determine what level of ongoing supervision and management is necessary to ensure staff and volunteers perform their role in a way that promotes child safety and wellbeing.
- Set out standards for child safety performance in staff contracts and state how performance will be assessed in regular reviews
- Include child safety considerations in supervision between people managers and individual staff.
- Give people managers guidance on steps to take when managing a staff member whose behaviour raises child safety concerns, and when to escalate concerns about staff behaviour.
- Communicate regularly with staff and volunteers about the Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct in supervision meetings, at staff meetings, in newsletters and staff updates.
- Provide refresher child safe training for staff and volunteers.
- Include child safety and wellbeing as a regular agenda item for staff meetings at all levels of the organisation.
- Include child safety and wellbeing goals in staff professional development plans.
- Graduate teachers are provided with additional induction opportunities generally over several school terms, including strategies to enhance teaching and learning.
- Mentoring, coaching and in-house training strategies are used for all staff.
- Leading Teachers model and coach staff weekly
- 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.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

## Suitability of volunteers, visitors and contractors

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy

<https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols> , which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

All visitors to NSA are required to report to the school office on arrival (see exceptions in relation to parents/carers in the *Visitors to the Schools Policy*).

NSA will ensure that our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct is available and visible to visitors when they sign in.

Regular Contractors will be required to undergo OHS Contractor Induction. In addition to the Contractor Handbook, contractors will receive the NSA Child Safe Code of Conduct. Irregular Contractors will be treated as "Visitors" for this purpose.

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A valid Working with Children Check will be required in compliance with this policy for all volunteers, visitors (if applicable) and Contractors who are working with students.

### **Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness**

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.
- Provide child safety induction programs for new school staff, volunteers and school council members.
- Provide child safety training for school staff, volunteers and school council members.
- Ensure mandatory reporters complete the annual mandatory reporting training.
- Provide child safety updates and information to staff and volunteers, as needed.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

### **School council training and education**

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse and the procedures for managing child abuse complaints and concerns
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Northern School for Autism child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices
- 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

### **Complaints and reporting processes**

Northern School for Autism fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found at <https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols>.

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If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures <https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols>. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy <https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols> cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Northern School for Autism 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 Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Northern School for Autism will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse

## **Communications**

Northern School for Autism is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school
- updates in our school newsletter
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

## **Privacy and information sharing**

Northern School for Autism collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

## **Records management**

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

This includes DET Recruitment appropriate records are kept.

Ensuring all recordkeeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

## **Review of child safety practices**

At Northern School for Autism, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

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- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

### **Related policies and procedures**

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Bullying Prevention & Response Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Digital Learning in Schools Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

### **Related Department of Education and Training policies**

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

### **Other related documents**

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#)

### **Policy status and review**

The Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community

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## Approval

<b>Created date</b>	29 Oct 2024
<b>Consultation</b>	1/11/24 Newsletter asking for Parent and Community feedback 31/10/24 sent to School Council for Consultation
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Pamela Mathieson, Principal
<b>Endorsed on</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Next review date</b>	Oct 2026

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