

Merrivale Primary School

Child Safety Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact:
merrivale.ps@education.vic.gov.au

Purpose

The Merrivale Primary School Child Safety and Wellbeing 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.

Statement of commitment to child safety

Merrivale Primary School 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 have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

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.

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. 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.

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.

Roles and responsibilities

School leadership team

Our school leadership team (comprising the principal, assistant principal, learning specialist, literacy leader and numeracy leader) 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.

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
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures 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.

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, NOTE: school councils can use the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- 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.

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Merrivale Primary School has nominated a child safety champion (assistant principal) to support the principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

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

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

- Principal/assistant principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach principal/assistant principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- Principal/assistant 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 (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

Our Assistant Principal 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](#) 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 Merrivale Primary School, 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:

Build a strong school culture to support cultural inclusion:

- Begin events and meetings with an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item. Use this as an opportunity to pause and reflect or open a discussion.
- Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school grounds.
- Make Aboriginal voice part of decision making in matters that affect Aboriginal students. Be open to different ways of doing and expressing things.
- Celebrate the local Aboriginal community in communications with students, staff, volunteers and families. Share information through school newsletters, school assemblies, parent information nights.
- Lead on safety and inclusion for all Aboriginal students and their families. Learn more about Aboriginal histories and cultures, both locally and across Australia. Speak with respect and confidence about Aboriginal culture, knowledge systems and people.
- Build schoolwide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes.

Provide a welcoming environment for Aboriginal children

- Acknowledge and draw on the existing knowledge of Aboriginal students and their families.
- Ask for feedback from Aboriginal students and their families about what the school does well, and what can be improved.
- Implement the [Koorie Education Policy](#) to create a learning environment for all students that acknowledges, respects and values Aboriginal cultures and identities (Government schools).
- Use [Koorie Engagement Support Officers](#) (KESOs) to provide advice to government schools about creating culturally inclusive learning environments.

Actively address racism

- Express zero tolerance of racism in your statement of commitment to child safety included in your Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and other documents.

- 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.
- Put school leaders at the front of anti-racist action. Discuss racism and work to address unconscious bias and racism in the school community.
- 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.

Guide and train staff and volunteers

- Train staff and volunteers to understand the importance of Aboriginal culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal students.
- Work with the local Aboriginal community to build staff, volunteer and student knowledge and respect for Aboriginal culture and to promote cultural inclusion.
- Arrange [Community Understanding Safety Training \(CUST\)](#) or equivalent for staff.

Build knowledge of Aboriginal culture in school planning and curriculum

- Find out about the Traditional Owners of the land/s where the school is situated at the Map of Indigenous Australia and learn about the importance of acknowledging Traditional Owners.
- Include Aboriginal history and culture in professional learning for staff and volunteers and in curriculum planning for students.
- Develop a resource bank of digital, hardcopy print and other artefacts that support the inclusion of Aboriginal content across the curriculum.

Partner with Aboriginal communities

- Support local Aboriginal businesses through school procurement.
- Engage with local Aboriginal communities via Traditional Owner groups, corporations or the Registered Aboriginal Party to review cultural safety in school environment, systems and processes.
- Visit an Aboriginal cultural learning centre, including Tower Hill.

Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Merrivale Primary School, 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 through implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct and our school values of Respect, Honesty, Gratitude and Kindness.

We inform students of their rights through 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. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns through our school email: merrivale.ps@education.vic.gov.au

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.

At Merrivale we:

- Display visually engaging and easy-to-read posters promoting student voice and agency.
- Discuss commitment to student's voice at enrolment and organise orientation activities focused on activating student's voice.
- Invite students to provide feedback on school-wide decisions and take their views into account in school decision-making.
- Document student participation in activities that contribute to the life of the school.
- Involve students in consultation processes and inform them of their impact on decision-making.
- Demonstrate that the school takes students seriously by acting on their concerns, noting that what might seem unimportant to an adult may be important to a young person.
- Provide students who find it harder to speak up or be heard with multiple avenues for communicating, including writing, drawing, or physical forms of communication.

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 Merrivale Primary School 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:

- seeking input from families and the community through the school website, newsletters, other communications, school council, subcommittees of school council, student, staff, and parent meetings
- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents at our website <https://www.merrivale-ps.vic.edu.au>
- 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.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school including the wellbeing room, front office and in classrooms.

At Merrivale we create a welcoming environment by:

- Nominating a contact person for new enrolments and provide their details in induction materials or school transition packs.
- Provide new enrolments with family welcome packs that include information about child safety, the school's complaints processes and how to raise concerns.
- Conduct school open days or host community events, such as a school fete or fair, to welcome families and the broader community.
- Create a welcoming environment at school reception so community members and families feel respected, included and safe to come onto school grounds.

Engage families and communities in building a child safe organisation by:

- Asking parents and carers about their children. This can be in formal settings like parent/teacher interviews, or during chance meetings at pick-up and drop-off.
- Provide parents and carers with information about children's rights via newsletters, or parent information sessions.
- Regularly engage with parents, carers and students and discuss the needs of students through parent/teacher interviews.

Provide regular opportunities to communicate:

- Provide frequent opportunities for parents and carers to engage with staff to discuss their children's experiences at school.
- Organise interpreters and translations to engage families from non-English speaking backgrounds in conversations about the school's child safety strategies.
- Incorporate child safety questions in parent and carer surveys to measure awareness and confidence in the school's child safety approach and to support ongoing improvement.
- Consider hosting community workshops on child safety and wellbeing topics, for example, respectful relationships or online safety. Provide families with take-home information to help them to talk to their children about safety and wellbeing at home.
- Communicate with and appropriately involve families at all stages of the process if a concern is raised or complaint is made.

Reflect the diversity of the school community:

- Make newsletters and communications inclusive. Normalise a diversity of family profiles and reflect the characteristics of your school community.
- Select meeting venues that are physically accessible, welcoming and culturally safe.
- Encourage volunteer positions from families from diverse backgrounds, including people with a disability, Aboriginal people, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Provide inclusive and accessible information:

- Display the PROTECT in shared areas that are accessible to parents and the community.
- Make sure child safety information is easy to read – consider font size, font style, colours used, formatting and visual presentation.
- Provide links to the school's child safety policies in the school's social media posts, newsletters and staff circulars.
- Check that the students, school staff, and members of the school community know who to contact if they have a concern about child safety. Keep this information up to date and accessible, and review it regularly.
- Use images and other accessibility aids to help child safety information be understood by families that have low literacy or vision.
- Translate child safety information into multiple languages to reflect your school community.

Build family and community involvement in child safety into business as usual

- Make child safety a standing item at school governing authority meetings.
- Report on the outcomes of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and students to show transparency and accountability.
- Encourage families and carers to advocate for their children and champion their safety while at school and in other environments, including extra-curricular activities such as sports, tutoring, music and language classes.
- Promote [Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships education](#) to families.
- Acknowledge the important role that families and communities play in monitoring children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to disclose concerns.
- Communicate with and appropriately involve families at all stages of the process if a concern or complaint is raised.

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 unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

At Merrivale we recognise the diverse backgrounds, needs and circumstances of students:

Recognise the range of diverse student and family attributes. Pay attention to:

- cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- the needs of students with disability and responses to disability
- the needs of students from diverse religious and cultural communities
- the needs of very young students and children
- the impact of prior trauma
- gender differences
- the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students
- challenges for students who are in foster care, out of home care, living away from home or international students
- students experiencing pregnancy or who are young parents
- socio-economic factors (experiencing family homelessness, insecure employment or accommodation, individual or family contact with the justice system, poverty, addiction, low educational attainment, remote or regional isolation).
- Pay attention to diverse student cohorts and individuals in your community, recognising that they may have higher risk of harm.
- Normalise asking for and using people's preferred pronouns and names for students.
- Use contemporary, culturally sensitive and inclusive examples when discussing families, relationships or professions and vocations.

Identify and address challenges that students experience due to their diverse attributes:

- Communicate that discrimination and bullying are not tolerated – if incidents of bullying or discrimination occur, address the incident in line with school policy.
- Let students know they can raise concerns or report incidents that occurred at school and outside the school.
- Check in with vulnerable students and their families to confirm their needs are being met. This can occur at pick-up or drop-off, at parent teacher interviews or through informal discussions.
- Engage genuinely with students. Find out what matters to them, what they know and don't know about safety, and what they need to be safe and feel safe.
- Validate students' feelings. Students may feel that they have not been listened to or believed in the past.

- Take a holistic approach when responding to family violence.
- Respond to family violence in a way that is accessible, culturally responsive, safe, child-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory.

Put in place policies and strategies to help meet the diverse needs of students:

- Ensure school environments are welcoming and inclusive. For example:
 - display flags representing different cultures within the school community
 - provide materials in different languages
 - decorate the school with artistic expressions from students and young people.
- Provide child safety information in accessible, child-friendly language and formats.
- Accompany child safety information with the support materials needed to help students and families interpret it.
- Anticipate the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and life circumstances. Don't expect all students to be equally empowered to ask for what they need.
- Provide staff and volunteers with training to identify and address racism, bullying and discrimination.
- Create opportunities to remind staff and volunteers about student diversity and accommodating students and young people's needs.
- Seek out expert advice as needed to support inclusion, such as an occupational therapist, speech pathologist, provision planning.

Support diversity through school planning and resources

- Recognise dates that connect with your school community, for example:
 - Cultural Diversity Week (March)
 - National Reconciliation Week (27 May–3 June)
- Compile a range of age-appropriate instructional materials for exploring differences and similarities in class including:
 - Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships resources
 - Books, and resources that reflect diverse views and perspectives
 - Speech and drama scripts that explore themes around diversity.
- Use images of students with diverse characteristics in school publications to reflect the school community.

Suitable staff and volunteers

At Merrivale Primary School, 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](#).

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.
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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 Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

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. This will be done by annual performance and development reviews.

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.

At Merrivale supervision and people management focused on child safety and wellbeing:

- Include child safety considerations in supervision between people managers and individual staff.
- Communicate regularly with staff and volunteers about the Child Safety and Wellbeing 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.

Training and support to uphold child safety:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- how to contribute to identifying, removing or reducing risks
- recordkeeping and information sharing requirements
- school values and philosophy
- procedures for managing complaints
- privacy and reporting protocols.
- Train all staff and volunteers as appropriate to their roles, on topics such as:
 - child safety (including family violence)
 - mandatory reporting
 - responding to student sexual offending
 - human rights and the rights of children
 - diversity and inclusion
 - harassment and bullying
 - cultural safety
 - privacy and information sharing.
- Cover important topics in your child safety training, including:
 - risk factors and signs of harm, including intentional and unintentional harm, physical or emotional harm, bullying or cyberbullying, abuse and neglect

- how to identify and respond to child safety risks, especially for vulnerable students
- how to facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision making and raise concerns
- how to engage with families to support student's safety and wellbeing
- how to appropriately handle or share sensitive information relating to a child's wellbeing health or safety.
- Deliver regular child safety briefings for all staff, for example through staff meetings, newsletters, year level briefings.
- Inform staff and volunteers, as appropriate, of their responsibilities under the information sharing and family violence reforms.

Make child safety a key part of recruitment processes

- Provide role descriptions for staff and volunteers to clearly outline their duties and responsibilities regarding supervision, child safety and wellbeing, and diversity and inclusion. This may involve revising existing role descriptions.
- Make sure all staff, particularly those with mandatory reporting responsibilities, are aware of the up-to-date processes for making a report.
- Provide child safety champion/s with information to support their function relating to child safety, family violence and information sharing.
- Put a process in place to check staff and volunteers' working with children clearance status or equivalent background check on at least an annual basis.
- Include child safety in ongoing staff support, supervision and performance management processes.
- Align complaints processes with best practice, including the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and Reportable Conduct requirements.
- Declare and manage any potential conflicts of interest, such as family or business relationships or close friendships.
- Provide clear avenues for staff to report concerns.
- Involve staff in after-action reviews when a child safety incident has occurred

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our [Volunteers Policy](#), 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.

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.

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.

At Merrivale we promote a culture of online and physical safety for all students:

- Supervise students properly in all settings, including the playground, excursions and camps.
- Give particular attention to the safety, diverse needs and vulnerabilities of students in each activity or setting.
- Inform students and their families about appropriate use of the school's technology, safety tools and how to seek help and report concerns including cyberbullying and online grooming.
- Keep up to date with current online safety issues and expert information from specialist government and non-government bodies including the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, and eSmart Schools.
- Promote activities in the school community that connect schools and communities and raise awareness to prevent bullying and violence (e.g. [National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence](#)).

Manage risk in physical spaces

- Identify and document the school's child safety risks in the school's risk register or equivalent and ensure strategies are in place to manage those risks.
- Consider off-site physical environments for student use and where reasonably possible, inspect these sites and venues for events, excursions, camps and international student accommodation ahead of time.
- Consider risks arising from child-to-child and adult-to-child interactions in physical and online spaces.
- Keep records of risk management activities, including risk assessments for camps and excursions.
- Provide training and refresher training to staff and relevant volunteers on risk management policies and procedures.

Supervise appropriately

- Inform students about spaces that are off limits, including out-of-bounds areas, storerooms and staff rooms.
- Nominate ratios of staff and volunteers to students for different types of activities.
- Keep records of any court orders in place regarding access or intervention orders and communicate to staff who can collect students in these circumstances.
- Undertake works to improve lighting in poorly lit areas.
- Let students know how to raise concerns and where to go if they need help.
- Keep records of incidents that occur, including accidents and medical events.
- Review incidents against policies and procedures, including seeking student feedback on how incidents were handled and how safe they felt, and make improvements as needed.

Promote student safety online

- Give students opportunities to learn, play, create, entertain and stay connected.
- Facilitate age-appropriate ways to use the internet and social media for students utilising [Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships](#), [Safe Schools](#) and also [Office of the e-Safety Commissioner](#)
- Inform students about online safety risks, including:
 - cyberbullying and trolling
 - invasion of privacy or digital surveillance

- inappropriate sharing of images
- phishing, harvesting of personal information or data theft
- identity theft
- malevolent software (malware)
- offensive images and messages
- age-inappropriate online content
- impersonation/catfishing
- grooming.
- Prohibit the use of student email addresses to sign up to unauthorised third-party services and communicate this expectation to students and the school community.
- Use filtering software on school-based devices.
- Encourage parents to use parental controls on personal devices.
- Advise students on how they can seek help from a trusted adult if they are exposed to inappropriate imagery or content that upsets them.
- Monitor online activity and respond to breaches of the online policies and procedures with appropriate consequences.

Promote acceptable behaviour by staff and volunteers

- Address acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour in online environments in the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Outline acceptable use of personal devices by staff and volunteers.
- Have guidelines for taking, storing and using images of children and students – including photos and video recordings.
- Deal with misuse of digital devices and unacceptable behaviour in accordance with school policy.
- Uphold policies and report breaches in accordance with the school's complaints handling processes and Code of Conduct.
- Provide avenues for students, families, carers, communities and staff to report online issues or concerns.
- Protect student privacy by supporting students to limit the amount of information provided online.

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
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Merrivale Primary School child safety policies, procedures, codes and practices

Complaints and reporting processes

Merrivale Primary School 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 on the school website <https://www.merrivale-ps.vic.edu.au>

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees and must follow our Child Safety [Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#). 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](#) cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Communications

Merrivale Primary School 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 and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) 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

Merrivale Primary School 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](#)

Review of child safety practices

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

We will:

- 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.

At Merrivale we create and update child-safe policies:

- Developing a register of existing child safe standard policies, noting the date the policy was approved, and schedule a review date every 2 years.
- When required, develop a work plan and establish a working group led by the [child safety champion](#), to review and update policies and procedures.
- Monitor and manage child safety risks using a risk register.
- Determine the causes of child safety incidents and monitor for repeat issues or systemic failures.
- Use complaints and incidents as a learning opportunity to inform continuous improvement.

Implement current child safe policies and procedures:

- Keep records of documentation outlining recommendations on how child safe practices can be improved and implemented.
- Develop an audit log (that is appropriately secured and has version control) of complaints and concerns, demonstrating appropriate responses and mitigations.
- Review complaints received and incidents reported for gaps, weaknesses or failures in policies.
- Make review findings and recommendations easy to access and understand.
- Include findings from child safety reviews in child safety training for staff and volunteers.
- Communicate review outcomes to students in age-appropriate ways.
- Inform the school community of any child safety policy changes were relevant or applicable.
- Use surveys, focus groups and discussions to review the accessibility and level of awareness of child-safe policies and procedures by students, families, staff and volunteers.

Related policies and procedures

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

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Digital Learning 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](#)

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.

Approval

Created date	August 2024
Consultation	Policy has been communicated to school council, staff, students, parents, carers and the school community through newsletter August 2024
Endorsed by	Principal
Endorsed on	August 2024
Next review date	August 2026