

## CHILD SAFE POLICY:

### OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Brentwood Park is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision - making.

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 to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

#### **Child abuse includes:**

-any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence, or
- an offence under section 49B (2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)

-the infliction, on a child, of:

- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

Brentwood Park is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

Brentwood Park is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Brentwood Park 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 children safe under the Child Safe Standards;
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 issues;
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; and
10. value the input of, and communicate regularly, with families and carers.

### STUDENTS

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Brentwood Park. 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 our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal 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.

### **SCHOOL LEADERS**

The Principal Class Leaders will ensure that staff members and volunteers understand their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's *Child Safe Code of Conduct*.

### **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Child Safe Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

### **TRAINING AND SUPERVISION**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Staff will undertake the online training *Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations*.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse, promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Brentwood Park'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. 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 develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Brentwood Park understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We are non-discriminatory in our recruitment.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check. A register of WWCC will be maintained by the Office Manager and be tabled at school council meetings.

We carry out reference checks and liaise with the appropriate authorities to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are part of the recruitment process undertaken through the Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration.

## **FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

## **PRIVACY**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, 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**

Brentwood Park takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Listening:** When gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant's account of things, take them seriously and check understanding
- **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 our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

## **ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS**

Brentwood Park takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff 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. Immediate action should include reporting the concern to the Child Safety Officer, Jenny Reid, or if unavailable, a member of the Principal Class Team who will report concerns to DHS Child Protection.

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.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

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), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have online social contact with a child).

The school's risk management includes:

- The Child safety Code of Conduct-outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with respect to child safety and child abuse
- Appointing a Child safety Officer.
- Screening as part of the staff recruitment process
- Working With Children Checks, Police Records, reference checks
- Supervision of students during recess and lunch breaks, as well as 15 minutes before and after school
- ICT Acceptable Use Agreement for students
- Teacher supervision of student internet usage
- Students move around the school in pairs during class time, not individually, for example, a toilet break
- Out of bounds areas in the school to ensure that students are not placed at risk
- Staff and Volunteer training
- Adequate monitoring of visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors
- elearning mandatory reporting training for staff

## **REVIEW**

Policy to be reviewed in 2020

**Approved by School Council 12/11/2019**