

# CHILD SAFE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT POLICY

**Definition:** Child participation and empowerment is concerned with giving children an 'authentic voice' in the school's decision making processes.

## **Rationale:**

In 2013, the Victorian Parliament held an Inquiry into the 'Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations,' resulting in the 'Betrayal of Trust Report.' This report demonstrated that children are vulnerable to abuse in organisations where there is little or no culture that promotes child empowerment or voice. The report found that more could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety. In response, the Victorian Government brought in child safe standards for organisations that work with children, including schools.

## **Aims:**

This policy aims to put in place a culture where child voice is raised and empowerment valued through agreed beliefs and strategies. Children learn best when they feel safe, respected, empowered and have a voice in the school's decision making processes.

## **Implementation:**

### ***What we will see in classrooms:***

- A set of agreed rules and protocols for each classroom based on shared beliefs between the children and teacher
- The REACH (Resilience, Energy, Accountability, Compassion and Honesty) values clearly displayed and referred to
- Adult /child conversations that are respectful, kind and compassionate
- Lessons that are sensitive to, and developmentally educate children about, cultural diversity, Aboriginal customs, disability and sexual preference

### ***What we will see in the curriculum:***

- F-6 developmentally appropriate regular lessons that relate to child abuse – recognition, reporting and dealing with trauma
- 'Bravehearts,' will be used to assist teachers in F-2
- The sexual education curriculum will include age appropriate lessons on sexual grooming and how to recognise sexual abuse
- The eSmart curriculum will include age appropriate lessons on cybersafety
- Scope and Sequence documents that promote the cultural safety of children Aboriginal children, children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disability and children with preferred sexual orientations
- 'Bounce Back' lessons F-6
- 'Respectful Relationships' planning and lesson implementation

### ***What we will see in school organisation:***

- A 'Child Safety Officer,' and nominee, appointed each year
- Child safety policies and protocols explained to staff and community at the start of each school year
- 'Child Safe' policy agreement signed by all adults working with children at the school
- Children, families and staff made aware of how to report instances of child abuse
- Policies relating directly to Child Safety Ministerial Order 8702: Child Safe Policy, Child Safe Code of Conduct, Staff Recruitment, Child Safe Incident Template
- Policies to support child safety: Camps, Excursions
- KidsMatter school registration

- Structures to ensure children have a voice: Agreed school leadership positions Yr 6, Year 3-6 Leadership Groups, assembly protocols (children MC the assemblies), 3 Way June Interviews,
- Regular student surveys – POLT
- Analysis of Yr 5/6 Student Opinion surveys and prompt action on issues raised
- Foundation and Year 5/6 buddy program
- Regular review and discussion as to how child voice and empowerment can be raised throughout the school
- Child input to be sought on all extra curricula events that affect them – Yr 6 Graduation Dinner, School House celebrations, special assemblies, school picnic

**Evaluation:**

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...

July 2016