Albert Park Primary School CHILD SAFE POLICY STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Rationale:

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

Albert Park Primary School is 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.

Albert Park Primary School has a zero tolerance for child abuse.

Aims:

• To ensure that every person involved in Albert Park Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Implementation:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- 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;
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk:
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Review: This Policy Statement will be reviewed every 2 years or as required

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

26th August 2019

Albert Park Primary School CHILD SAFETY

CODE OF CONDUCT

Rationale:

Albert Park Primary is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, whether students or visitors to the school. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

Aims:

- To ensure that every person involved in Albert Park Primary School has a responsibility to understand the
 important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety
 of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.
- This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how best to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, DET policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards as they apply to staff and other personnel.

Implementation:

The Principal and school leaders will provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively. The Assistant Principal will be appointed the Child Safety Leader for the duration of the School Strategic Plan 2018-21.

Acceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to the school's Child Safe Statement of Commitment
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- ensuring that staff, volunteers, contractors and members of the school community interact with students within 'line of sight' of others
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all students, particularly students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, students of culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with a disability

- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership, and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.
- in the school environment or at other school events, staff may consume alcohol in moderation in line with the School Policy Advise Guide, however they are to be mindful of their duty of care obligations and are to remain professional at all times.

Unacceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context such as smacking or picking up children
- staff, volunteers, contractors and members of the school community interact with students in enclosed spaces
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs
 relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes 1

Review:

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed every 2 years or as required

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

26th August 2019

¹ SPAG: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx. The policy says the school should get consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. This applies every time a photo is taken. The same policy applies for excursions and school activities.

Be Kind and Fair

Albert Park Primary School CHILD SAFETY REPORTING OBLIGATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This policy applies to all Victorian Government Schools and reflects legal obligations and Department requirements.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand the various legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety that apply to Albert Park Primary School. The specific procedures that are applicable at our school are contained at Appendix A.

This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities and services [such as Camp Australia].

Rationale

All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests.

APPS understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation)
- Family violence
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect (including medical neglect)
- Grooming

The staff at APPS are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations. For detailed information about each obligation, please refer to <u>Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools</u>.

At APPS we also recognise the diversity of the children and young people at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety.

Implementation

Mandatory Reporting

Principals, registered teachers, registered medical practitioners, nurses and all members of the police force are mandatory reporters under the *Children*, *Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic).

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse,
 and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at APPS to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the principal does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module* annually. [We also require/encourage all other staff to undertake this module, even where they are not mandatory reporters].

For more information about Mandatory Reporting see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations.

Child in need of protection

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

The policy of the Department of Education and Training (DET) requires **all staff** who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to report their concerns to DHHS or Victoria Police, and discuss their concerns with the school leadership team.

For more information about making a report to DHHS Child Protection, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: Child Protection – Making a Report and Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

At APPS we also encourage all staff to make a referral to Child FIRST when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST see the School Policy and Advisory Guide: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations.

Reportable Conduct

Our school must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (9637 2594) if we become aware of an allegation of 'reportable conduct'.

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has formed a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- behaviour causing significant emotional or physical harm to a child;
- significant neglect of a child; or
- misconduct involving any of the above.

The Department, through the Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

Our principal must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former teachers, contractors, volunteers (including parents), allied health staff and school council employees.

If school staff become aware of reportable conduct by any person in the above positions, they should notify the school principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the principal, they should notify the Regional Director.

For more information about Reportable Conduct see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Be Kind and Fair

Failure to disclose offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (ie persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 years or over.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000 or local police station) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

"Reasonable excuse" is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed, for example, through a mandatory report to DHHS Child Protection.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: <u>Failure</u> to disclose offence.

Failure to protect offence

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult (ie persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: <u>Failure</u> to protect offence.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic). This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.

For more information about this offence and reporting obligations see: Child Exploitation and Grooming.

Review:

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or as required

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

26th August 2019

APPENDIX A: CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCEDURES AT APPS

For students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at APPS they should start with their Classroom teacher, the School guidance Officer or the Assistant Principal

Managing disclosures made by students

When managing a disclosure you should:

- listen to the student and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you").

When managing a disclosure you should AVOID:

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be
 unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and
 others will do your best to help).

General procedures

Our school will follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse (Four Critical Actions) when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

All staff at our school who believe that a child is in need of protection, even if it doesn't meet the threshold required for mandatory reporting or the staff member is not a mandatory reporter, should in the first instance, speak to the Assistant principal or should make the required reports to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police as necessary.

At our school the Assistant Principal will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

Reporting suspicions, disclosures or incidents of child abuse

Responsibilities of all school staff

If a school staff member reasonably suspects or witnesses an incident of child abuse or receives a disclosure of child abuse, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid and
- Speak to the Assistant principal as soon as possible, who will follow the Four Critical Actions.
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure [using the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template] and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in the Assistant Principal's locked filing cabinet.
- If the staff member is a mandatory reporter and reasonably believes that a student has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse from which the child's parents have not protected the child, they must ensure that a report to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police has been made by the Assistant Principal If the report has not been made by another staff member, the mandatory reporter must make the report.
- If the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child, they must ensure that a report to Victoria Police has been made by the Assistant Principal. If the report has not been made by another staff member, the staff member must make the report.

In circumstances where a member of the leadership team disagrees that a report needs to be made, but the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that the child is in need of protection and/or has been the victim of sexual abuse, the staff member must still contact DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police to make the report.

The Assistant Principal is responsible for promptly managing the school's response to an incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the incident, suspicion or disclosure is taken seriously. The Assistant Principal is also responsible for responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.

If the Assistant Principal receives a report from a school staff member or member of the school community of a suspicion, disclosure or incident of child abuse, they must:

- Follow the Four Critical Actions as soon as possible, including:
 - Responding to an emergency
 - Reporting to authorities/referring to services

- Contacting parents/carers and
- Providing ongoing support.

- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure, including actions taken [using the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template] and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in the Assistant Principal's office, in a locked office filing cabinet. They are also responsible for ensuring that any staff member who reported the incident, disclosure or suspicion to them also makes and keeps notes of the incident.
- At APPS, Assistant Principal will be responsible for ensuring that there is a prompt response to the disclosure and that the child is appropriately supported.

If the principal/other nominated staff member responsible above is unavailable, the most experienced teacher in the school will take on the role and responsibilities described in this section.

Duty of care and ongoing support for students

Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students. All staff must ensure that the Assistant Principal or other appropriate staff member is aware of any incidents, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible after they occur. This will allow appropriate supports to be put in place for the student affected.

For school visitors, volunteers and school community members

All community members aged 18 years or over should be aware of their legal obligations – see Failure to disclose offence above, in this Policy.

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details see the Four Critical Actions -

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions ChildAbuse.pdf [There is no requirement for community members to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to DHHS Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, and where disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.]

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to Action 2.

calling 000 for urgent medical and/ or police assistance to respond to ediate health or safety concern school for future liaison with Police. naintain the integrity of the potential

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

and Suspicions of Child Abuse RESPONDING TO

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a critical role in protecting children in your care.

You must act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness form a reasonable belief * that a child an incident, receive a disclosure or has, or is at risk of being abused.

 You must act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another

Child Abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if

use the Responding to Suspected you make a decision not to report.

person tells you about the abuse)

It is strongly recommended that you

AN EMERGENCY

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Fall incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible.

— Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

If a child is at immediate risk of harm

you must ensure their safety by: separating alleged victims administering first aid

school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police. suspected child abuse involving a You must report all instances of VICTORIA POLICE

You must also report internally to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Where necessary you may also need to

crime scene and preserve evidence.

identifying a contact person at the

School principal and/or leadership t

Employee Conduct Branch DET Incident Support and

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS School principal and/or leadership tear Operations Centre.

Diocesan education office.

NDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Young People on 1300 782 978 Commission for Children and School principal and/or school chairperson

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' must be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS Employee Conduct Branch

9

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS Commission for Children and Young People on 1300 782 978.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

Protection if a child is considered to be: **DHHS CHILD PROTECTION** You must report to DHHS Child

in need of protection from child abuse likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is

VICTORIA POLICE

You must also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You must also report internally to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

 School principal and/or leadership team DET Incident Support and Operations

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

School principal and/or leadership Diocesan education office.

NDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

School principal and/or chairperson.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE

The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family

THE LOOKOUT (03) 9825 7200 VICTORIA

violence: http://www.lookout.org.au.

for counselling, information and a referral service: 1800 737 732.

can be referred to 1800 Respect

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT (03) 9637 2595 BRANCH

Melbourne (03) 9267 0228 **DIOCESAN OFFICE** Sale (03) 5622 6600 Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377 Ballarat (03) 5337 7135







PROVIDING CONTACTING

A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

Your school must provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of ONGOING SUPPORT PARENTS/CARERS Your principal must consult with DHHS
Child Protection or Victoria Police to
determine what information can be shared

a Student Support Plan in consultation This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

with parents/carers. They may advise:

For suspected student sexual assault,

Actions: Student Sexual Offending.

please follow the Four Critical

not to contact the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the

parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature

to contact the parents/carers and

provide agreed information (this

must be done as soon as possible preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)

all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

how to communicate with

Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family

referral or seeking advice from:

are open to receiving support)

DHHS Child Protection

Victoria Police.

minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)

If you believe that a child is not subject concerns for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a

OTHER CONCERNS

to abuse, but you still hold significant

safety plan, direct support and referral Strategies may include development of to wellbeing professionals and support

You must follow the Four Critical Actions every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes eporting new information to authorities.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599 South Division 1300 655 795 North Division 1300 664 977

West Division (Metro) 1300 664 977 East Division 1300 360 391

After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78. **AFTER HOURS**

CHILD FIRST

DRANGE DOOR

1800 126 126

PROTECT SEDUCATION VICTORIA Effection