

# Child Safe Standard 1

## Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

### Introduction

Registered schools have an important responsibility for keeping children safe. All registered schools are required to develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school.

This information sheet sets out the importance of culture in achieving a child safe organisation and provides questions to consider when working toward meeting each of the relevant requirements of Ministerial Order No. 870. The questions should assist in assessing how well a school currently meets the requirement, and what may need to be addressed in order to fully meet the requirement.

Child safety standard one (clause seven of Ministerial Order No. 870) has five specific requirements. They are that the school governing authority must:

- develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school
- allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies
- inform the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities
- put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices; and
- periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies.

Please note that the Ministerial Order defines some terms broadly. Some examples are included at the end of this information sheet. A full list of definitions is available at [www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes).

### What is organisational culture and how does it relate to child safety?

Embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in schools.

Organisational culture can be defined as a set of values, expectations and standards that influence the behaviour of the members of an organisation.

The organisational culture defines what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by people within the organisation.

To successfully embed a culture of child safety, a commitment to **zero tolerance of child abuse** must be led by the school governing authority. This commitment must be shared, openly and transparently, by all members of the school community, including staff (including school employees, contractors and volunteers), parents and families, visitors and children.

## Requirement 1—The school governing authority must develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school.

Questions	Yes	No
Does the school have a statement of philosophy or other governance arrangements that addresses child safety and child abuse? E.g. a policy that specifically refers to the school's vision, mission, values and objectives with respect to child safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the school leaders and managers helped and encouraged to develop an appropriate organisational culture of child safety by the school governing authority?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the statement of philosophy or other governance arrangements that address child safety and child abuse make it clear: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what is acceptable behaviour with respect to child safety and child abuse?</li> <li>• what is unacceptable behaviour with respect to child safety and child abuse?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the school governing authority been involved in developing the child safety strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the school community been consulted regarding the development of the child safety strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the school's strategies take into account the diversity of the children attending the school, and their particular vulnerabilities? E.g. children with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the strategies preventative, proactive and do they promote a shared responsibility to develop an open and aware culture of child safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the school's child safety risks been identified? Do the child safety strategies ensure all risks are managed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are children encouraged to openly discuss any concerns related to child safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are children informed about child abuse, the forms it can take, preventative strategies and how to report any occurrences?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all school staff (including contractors and volunteers), trained in the school's child safety strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are visitors to the school made aware of the schools expectations regarding child safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the school's expectations with respect to child safety published and displayed in prominent locations in all school environments? E.g. school buildings, website, online forums, and camp locations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is child safety included as an agenda item in regular meetings and in training? E.g. staff and management meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the school governing authority approved the child safety strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Requirement 2—The school governing authority must allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies.

Questions	Yes	No
<p>Have the strategies been broken down into a plan that includes roles and responsibilities to achieve the goals of the strategies? Responsibilities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leading the school’s child safety culture (e.g. coordinating the responsibilities listed below)</li> <li>• developing and enhancing the school’s child safety strategies</li> <li>• proactively monitoring the effectiveness of child safety strategies</li> <li>• coordinating reviews of the child safety strategies</li> <li>• communicating the school’s child safety strategies to the school community</li> <li>• training staff (including contractors and volunteers) in the school’s child safety strategies</li> <li>• leading or delivering programs for children about the school’s child safety strategies</li> <li>• developing policies, procedures and supporting documentation including communications and resources.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the roles and responsibilities been allocated to individual positions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the responsibilities been included in the position descriptions for all relevant roles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the people in these positions aware of their roles and responsibilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the people who are currently in these positions have the appropriate skills, training and capacity to fulfil these roles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Where the people in these positions do not have the skills or training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has the school taken action to ensure it satisfies its child safety obligations until the skill gaps are resolved</li> <li>• is training planned to address identified skill gaps?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Where the people in the roles do not have the capacity to fulfil the roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has the school put in place support to ensure the school satisfies its child safety obligations until the capacity issues are resolved?</li> <li>• does the school have a plan to ensure that the people in these roles have the capacity to fulfil their roles and responsibilities?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Requirement 3—The school governing authority must inform the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities.**

Questions	Yes	No
Has a culture of safety and awareness been embedded in your school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the school developed appropriate communications about the child safety strategies for the school community? E.g. staff resources, newsletters, bulletins, presentations at information sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the communications appropriately targeted to all of the people who make up the school community e.g. staff (including contractors and volunteers), students, parents and families?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the communications include detailed information about the allocated roles and responsibilities of people responsible for implementing the child safety strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Have the child safety strategies and allocated roles and responsibilities to achieve the strategies been communicated to the school community? For example, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>publishing information on the school website</li> <li>making parents aware of the school’s child safety strategies via the school newsletter</li> <li>predominantly displaying information about the school’s child safety strategies in school environments (for example, school buildings, website, online forums, camp locations)</li> <li>making information about the school’s child safety strategies available at other locations including school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events</li> <li>school information sessions</li> <li>making staff aware of the school’s child safety strategies in staff meetings</li> <li>ensuring the school’s child safety strategies form part of school governing authority member, staff (including contractor and volunteer) induction processes</li> <li>including information about the school’s child safety strategies in school governing authority member, staff (including contractor and volunteer) training and awareness sessions?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Requirement 4—The school governing authority must put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices.**

Questions	Yes	No
Has the school developed practices to implement the child safety strategies and achieve the goals of the strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the school implemented these practices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the school keep the school community informed of any changes or updates to the strategies and practices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Has the school communicated to the school community, including the school governing authority, about how it has put the child safety strategies into practice and the changes that are being made by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publishing information on the school website</li> <li>• making parents aware via the school newsletter</li> <li>• making the school’s child safety information available at other locations</li> <li>• providing information in school information sessions</li> <li>• making staff aware in staff meetings</li> <li>• including information in staff (including contractor and volunteer) training?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Requirement 5—The school governing authority must periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies.**

Questions	Yes	No
Is there a system for periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are new ideas and external scrutiny encouraged, enabling the identification of opportunities for improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the child safety strategies reviewed after an incident?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the reviews documented and recorded, including any opportunities for improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where opportunities for improvement are identified, are action plans developed with a prompt timeframe for implementation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are outcomes of reviews communicated to the school governing authority?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where opportunities for improvement are identified, is the progress of implementation of action plans subject to oversight by the school governing authority?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are outcomes of reviews including action plans to address areas for improvement communicated to the school community. For example, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>publishing information on the school website</li> <li>making parents aware via the school newsletter</li> <li>providing information in school information sessions</li> <li>making staff aware in staff meetings</li> <li>including child safety information in staff training?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Examples of potential child safety strategies

Examples of potential child safety strategies are listed below. These are provided as examples only and many schools will have additional strategies in place. Schools should consider their own circumstances and communities in developing their child safety strategies.

## **School governing authority**

- The school governing authority communicates that it has zero tolerance of child abuse (in any form).
- Child safety is a standing item for discussion at meetings of the school governing authority.
- Child safety strategies are developed and enhanced through ongoing review of the effectiveness of practice.
- An appropriate reporting process is in place for child abuse that includes overseeing outcomes.
- The school governing authority oversees the implementation and improvement of child safety strategies.
- The school governing authority communicates with the school community about the school's child safety strategies and their implementation.
- The school reports on child safety in its annual report.

## **School staff (includes contractors and volunteers)**

- Ensuring awareness of the child safety strategies and the allocated roles and responsibilities.
- Pre-employment reference checks that include checking for child safety.
- Checking of identification for staff as part of recruitment.
- Criminal history checks and confirming currency of Working with Children Check/Victorian Institute of Teaching registration.
- Obtaining verified academic transcripts for staff as part of recruitment.
- Query gaps in employment history.
- Psychometric testing.
- Induction in child safety for all staff and visitors.
- Child safety is a standing item for discussion at staff and manager meetings.
- Staff are trained to detect inappropriate behaviour.
- Staff are encouraged to report inappropriate behaviour.
- Screening and review of the suitability of existing staff through performance appraisal procedures.
- Positive behaviours are recognised and encouraged.
- Foster a culture of openness with approachable and supportive managers.

## **Children**

- Children are made aware of how to detect and report inappropriate behaviour.
- Children are encouraged to report inappropriate behaviour.
- The school has nominated contact persons that children can approach in relation to child safety.
- The school has child safety reporting procedures.
- The school provides counselling and other resources to support children.

# Environment

- The school has child safety strategies in place for all physical school environments, that include:
  - regularly reviewing the physical environment to ensure all risks are identified and managed
  - assessing new or changed physical environments for child safety risks
  - supervising or monitoring activities.
- The school has child safety strategies for its online environments (e.g. intranets, online learning systems, social media) including:
  - clear boundaries of roles between staff and children
  - proactive strategies to detect inappropriate behaviour such as online searches (Google, Facebook etc).
- Visitors are appropriately screened, supervised and made aware of the school's child safety strategies.

Further information

## Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

Child safe standards website (all schools): [www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafestandards](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafestandards)

## Government Schools

Website: [www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/childsafestandards](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/childsafestandards)

Email: [child.safe.schools@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:child.safe.schools@education.vic.gov.au)

## Catholic Schools

CECV Industrial Relations (03) 9267 0228

Catholic Education Melbourne, Student Wellbeing Information Line (03) 9267 0228

Catholic Education Office Ballarat, Child Safety (03) 5337 7135

Catholic Education Office Sale, Child Protection Officer (03) 5622 6600

Catholic Education Office Sandhurst, Child Safe Officer (03) 5443 2377

Website: [www.cecv.catholic.edu.au](http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au)

## Seventh-day Adventist Schools

Adventist Schools Victoria Office (03) 9264 7730

Website: [www.asv.adventist.edu.au](http://www.asv.adventist.edu.au)

## Lutheran Schools

Contact the regional office via phone (03) 9236 1250 or email [operations@levnt.edu.au](mailto:operations@levnt.edu.au)

**Independent Schools** who are members of Independent Schools Victoria

Telephone: (03) 9825 7200

Email: [enquiries@is.vic.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@is.vic.edu.au)

Website: [www.is.vic.edu.au](http://www.is.vic.edu.au)

## The Victorian Institute of Teaching

For *Victorian Teaching Profession Codes of Conduct and Ethics* and information about employer responsibilities to report action taken against registered teachers in response to allegations and concerns about registered teachers.

Website: [www.vit.edu.au](http://www.vit.edu.au)

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- Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians, Ombudsman of New South Wales, *Principles for Child Safety in Organisations*
- Australian Government, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Child Family Community Australia, CFCA Resource Sheet 2013, *Risk and Protective Factors for Child Abuse and Neglect*
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- Queensland Government, Department of Education and Training 2015, *Student Protection Policy*
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- State Government of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services 2015 *An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards*
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- State Government of Victoria, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Version 2, 2015 *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation*
- State Government of Victoria, Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2015 *What to Look for in a Child Safe Organisation*
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- Smallbone, Prof. S., School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Director, Griffith Youth Forensic Service, Griffith University, 2015, *Child Safe Schools: Can Sexual Abuse Be 'Designed Out'?*

# Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at [www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafte](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafte).

**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 or
  - serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

**Child-connected work** means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

**Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

**School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

**School staff** means:

- in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
  - employed under Part 2.4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
  - employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
  - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).
- in a non-government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
  - directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
  - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
  - a minister of religion<sup>1</sup>.
- **school governing authority** means:
  - the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
  - the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
  - the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

Explanatory note: There is a wide variety of school governance arrangements. Depending on the way a school is constituted and operated, the governing body for a school may be the school board, the school council, or some other person or entity. The school governing authorities may share or assign responsibility for discharging the requirements imposed by this Order, in accordance with the school's internal governance arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup> *minister of religion* has the same meaning as in the *Working with Children Act 2005*.