

Armenian Aginian School
Child Safe Policy



Policy Statement

Armenian Aginian School seeks to create a safe and supportive environment for the students who attend the school and for their families. To this end, the School ensures that processes are in place to identify emotional, physical harm or suspected harm to children to uphold their wellbeing and safety at all times by seeking immediate support within the School and/or from the Department of Child Safety/Police.

Armenian Aginian School creates a culture in which everyone – students, teachers, parents, school council and volunteers – feel confident, enabled and supported to safely disclose child safety concerns.

Strategies and Practices

- The School is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for students where adults treat them with understanding, dignity and respect at all times and listen to their concerns.
- The School is committed to Aboriginal Cultural safety, culturally and/or linguistically diverse cultural safety and the safety of children with disability respectively
- The School has developed and will implement Child Safety Policies for interaction with its students which will be subjected to ongoing assessment.
- The School will ensure people know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe and that they feel comfortable to do so.
- The School will engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development.
- This policy will be explained to all educators, staff and volunteers and copies of the policy will be made available to parents and other interested parties.
- The School will report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities.
- The School has nominated a Child Protection Officer to provide information and support for all students, staff, volunteers and carers regarding child protection matters.

The Duties of Child Safety Officer are:

To provide advice across the school on all policies and procedures that relate to child safety

To provide a central point for reporting allegations of abuse within the school for students, staff and volunteers and to report that to senior management

To provide training and support for all staff and volunteers

To undertake professional development in keeping up to date with trends and best practice

Attend internal child safety meetings

Child Safety Code of Conduct

The school Principal, teachers, school council and volunteers at Armenian Aginian School are required to abide by this code.

Be responsible for the overall welfare and wellbeing of the students, staff and volunteers.

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of Armenian Aginian School will:

- Work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes set in the school charter
- Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work
- Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions
- Act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people
- Be professional in their actions
- Respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers and only disclose information to people who have a need to know
- Maintain strict impartiality
- Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse.

No person in Armenian Aginian School shall:

- Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people
- Engage in any activity with a child or young person that might physically or emotionally harm them.
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves.
- Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a short time.
- Develop a special relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs
- Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- Arrange contact, including online contact with children or young people outside of the school's programs or activities
- Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child or his/her parents or guardians
- Arrive to school under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Engage in discussion of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- Do anything in contravention of the school's Child Safe Policy or this Code of Conduct.

Screening, supervision and selection of personnel

- All teachers, school council members and volunteers working at Armenian Aginian School are required to have a current Working With Children Card.

The Principal ensures the card details are kept in files and the expired ones are renewed.

The School only appoints suitable people with skills and experience to teach children, all new recruits work with experienced staff and are supervised at all times.

All new staff members are required to read and comply with the Armenian Aginian School Child Safe Policy before commencing their teaching duties.

Child safety and protection is regularly discussed at the meetings and at the beginning of each year the policy is discussed and reviewed by all members of staff.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints:

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We are aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers reporting allegations of abuse or that for some communication in English may be a barrier. We will endeavour to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible. Armenian Aginian School has protocols and procedures in place to enable all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Depending on the severity and urgency of the matter any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels which may include:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Child Protection
- Victoria Police

Legislative responsibilities: - This school takes its legal responsibilities seriously including:

- **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 police.
- **Failure to protect:** A person in a position of authority in an organisation will commit this offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Child Abuse:

Armenian Aginian School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to respond quickly and thoroughly. Such issues can be reported to:

- The Principal
- The Child Safety Officer
- Teachers at the school.

Our staff have been trained to deal appropriately with allegations, as well as how to support or assist children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

The DET guide 'Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools' includes comprehensive, detailed guidance and support for all staff.

First and foremost, we will ensure that children are safe from harm after which we will follow the procedures outlined in this document. This process includes making appropriate reports, following up and ensuring that children and any others involved receive appropriate support. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using the Child Safety Incident Report form. All information is considered confidential and written reports will be held securely.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported to DHHS Child Protection/Police/Child FIRST Report depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

We each have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. 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.

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.

Risk Management:

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Armenian Aginian School proactively manages risks of abuse to children by removing and reducing these risks and follows the Child Safety Standards.

The school has risk management strategies to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

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. The Child Safety Code of Conduct is publically available.
- Appointing a Child Safety Officer
- Screening as part of the staff recruitment process
- Working With Children checks are mandatory by all staff.
- Late Arrival, Early Dismissal, Absent notices must be signed
- Daily roll calls are undertaken per classroom to ensure each child is present.
- On and off site supervision of children during lunch breaks by teachers and committee members.
- All parents who wait for their children during school hours MUST wait in the church hall and are only allowed interaction with their own children during recess when other staff are present to ensure safety.
- Teacher supervision of student internet usage
- Children of Kindergarten and Prep classes must be accompanied by a peer and or a teacher during class times if leaving the classroom for toilet or water breaks.
- Children up to and including grade 2 must be picked up from the classroom to ensure safety. All other students are able to walk to their parents cars as long as in safe distance.
- Parents must give written consent if anyone else will be picking up the child besides parent or guardian.
- Out of bounds areas in the school to ensure that children are not placed at risk
- Staff and volunteer training
- Child safe environments information and awareness for visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors
- Adequate monitoring of visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors
- Refresher training for staff – see eLearning mandatory reporting module

Strategies to identifying and reduce or remove the risk of child abuse

- Awareness of Child Protection Law
- The School's code of conduct
- Educators and staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
- Professional standards guide policy and practice
- The induction of educators and staff members is comprehensive
- The performance of educators, staff members and volunteers is evaluated
- Safe Child Policy is established and will be maintained to ensure it is effective.

Empowerment and participation

At Armenian Aginian School students have the right to give their views and opinions.

The school will facilitate steps to promote the participation and empowerment of students by doing the following:

- Organize a positive and fun consultation meeting with students of diverse ages to inform them of the school's Child Safe Policy and asking them about what makes them feel safe and unsafe at the school.
- Listen to, acknowledge and take seriously the views put forward by the students.
- The students will be given clear and realistic boundaries of the discussion and what can or can't change at the school.
- The students will get feedback about their views and the impact it may have on policy making.

Date Reviewed: January 2022

Next Review Date: January 2023