

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Date Revised	June 2020
Next Revision Date	June 2023
Authorisation	Principal

PURPOSE

North-Eastern Montessori School is committed to creating and maintaining a school in which all children are safe from harm. North-Eastern has a zero tolerance of child abuse.¹ The child safe policy sets out the principles and framework governing the School's behaviours and activities that enact the child safe standards and which aim to keep all children safe from harm. The policy, together with the policy implementation documents, must be read and understood by all those connected to the School.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

- a. To protect students in our care from abuse.
- b. To create and maintain a culture of child protection within the school and its community.
- c. To enact the Child Safe Standards as set out in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety²

STRATEGY	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensuring clear procedures are in place for reporting suspected child abuse• developing co-operative relationships with appropriate services and/or professionals (including Child FIRST) in the best interests of children and their families• implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the School (Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians)• ensuring the School (Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students) are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.• Adhere to the Reportable Conduct Scheme by doing the following:	Principal or Acting Principal

² Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – respond to a reportable allegation made against a worker or volunteer from our organisation, by ensuring that allegations are appropriately investigated – report allegations which may involve criminal conduct to the police – notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) of allegations within three business days after becoming aware of the allegation – give CCYP certain detailed information about the allegation within 30 days after becoming aware of the allegation – after the investigation has concluded, give CCYP certain information including a copy of the findings of the investigation – ensure that our organisation has systems in place to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – prevent reportable conduct from being committed by a worker or volunteer within the course of their employment – enable any person to notify the Principal of a reportable allegation – enable any person to notify CCYP of a reportable allegation involving the Principal <p>investigate and respond to a reportable allegation against a worker of volunteer from our School</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that the staff who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (Regulation 84) ensuring recruitment and induction processes for educators, staff and contractors are in line with this policy (refer to Attachment 5 – Guidelines for the recruitment of staff and volunteers) • screening all educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students, including undertaking criminal history checks (if required), Working with Children Checks (except for individuals under the age of 18, registered teachers or police officers), reference checks and interviews (refer to <i>Staffing Policy</i>) • ensuring that volunteers/students, parents/guardians and other visitors to the service are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children • ensuring clear procedures are in place for reporting suspected child abuse (see <i>Mandatory Reporting</i>) • ensuring educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students undertake appropriate training and education on child protection, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse, knowing how to respond, and understanding processes for reporting and managing concerns/incidents (see Appendix 3: <i>Child Safety Concern Report</i>) 	<p>Principal, HR Manager & Nominated Supervisors</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that at the staff who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances • identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy • Ensure all staff are informed about the regulations regarding Mandatory Reporting, the failure to disclose offence, the failure to protect offense and the grooming offence under the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying the potential for and signs of child abuse at North-Eastern, and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the Principal (see Child Safety Risk Assessment) • ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the premises • maintaining confidentiality at all times in line with the Department of Education's expectations • Ensuring all children are aware of who they can report child abuse to and understanding what child abuse is. • Engage annually in Mandatory Reporting Training • Promote child safety at all times • Promote Children's Right at all times • Refrain from using any personal technology devices with children for any reason, educational or otherwise • Participate actively in awareness campaigns throughout the year, such as White Balloon Day • Familiarise themselves with the Reportable Conduct Scheme, including the resources available at https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme-information-sheets/ • Report any reportable allegation against the Principal to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) 	All Staff

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety³ⁱ \

North-Eastern is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

³ Principle of Inclusion; Standard 8: A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

North-Eastern has zero tolerance for child abuse. All staff and volunteers working at North-Eastern is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child safety is a shared responsibility between North-Eastern's employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the North-Eastern community.

North Eastern will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child safety policies.

North Eastern supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. North Eastern is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability. North-Eastern supports children who disclose child abuse or are affected by suspected child abuse.

Every person at North Eastern 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.

"Every child has the right to live a full and productive life. It is up to all of us to ensure our children grow up in environments that build confidence, friendship, security and happiness, irrespective of a person's family circumstances and background" (*Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people – refer to Sources*). The protection of children, one of the most vulnerable groups in society, is a shared community responsibility and involves ensuring that all children are safe, their needs are met and the possibility of child abuse is minimised.

In its planning, decision-making and operations North-Eastern 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 child safety paramount;
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.

MANDATORY REPORTING⁴

Under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 and the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, (Vic) mandatory reporting is designed to help protect children from harm due to physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect. School personnel mandated under this Act who, in the course of carrying out their duties, form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect, must report that belief and the grounds for it as soon as possible.

The policy assists school personnel to comply with this requirement and fulfil their responsibilities regarding the welfare and protection of children at risk. This policy complements guidelines provided by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to all Victoria schools.

Individuals working with children or young people have a duty of care to support and protect them. Where there is a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child/young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, adults in contact with or working with that child/young person are ethically bound to act to maintain their safety and wellbeing. For some professionals, there is also a legal obligation to report the concern to the appropriate authorities.

Acting on a belief that child abuse has occurred, or is occurring, can be the first important step in stopping the abuse and protecting the child from further harm.

It is a Child Protection worker's role to investigate and prove significant harm, so other professionals need only provide reasonable grounds for their belief.

General guidelines

- The best interests of the child should always be the primary consideration, with due regard to confidentiality and fairness to the person against who the allegation is made.
- Children should be encouraged to approach any person in the service to express concerns about their treatment, and should be made to feel confident that they will be taken seriously.
- Employees and volunteers must be clear about who they are expected/permitted to approach when expressing concerns.
- Any investigation undertaken by the service must ensure procedural fairness and natural justice for a person suspected of abusing a child.
- Records must be kept about any child safety concern or complaint (see Attachment 6 – Incident Form), and stored in accordance with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*. These records must contain information about the action taken, including any internal investigation and any reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.
- Everyone at the service must be made aware of the need to report serious matters involving child protection to external authorities.
- Privacy must be maintained, and information must only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis.
- Instances of physical and sexual abuse of children are crimes and must be reported to the police. If a child discloses any such abuse, the service must listen, respond and report to both the police and child protection authorities.

⁴ Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

- A report to the appropriate authorities can be made even if educators/staff and others working with children at the service do not have all the necessary information.
- Permission is not required from parents/guardians of a child where abuse is suspected, and parents/guardians do not need to be notified that a report has been made.

Forming a professional judgement

Forming an objective and professional judgement can be based on:

- warning signs (or indicators) of harm or potential harm, that have been observed or inferred
- knowledge of child development
- knowledge of cultural backgrounds
- knowledge of any difficulties experienced or support currently being received by a family
- consultation with colleagues and other professionals
- professional obligations and duty of care responsibilities
- established service protocols
- individual service procedures
- legal requirements, such as mandatory reporting.

PROCEDURE

Legal Responsibilities

If you believe in good faith that a child is in need of protection, then you must make a report without delay. Seeking assistance or advice should not hold-up the reporting process. You should attempt to file the report on the same day as the belief is formed.

1. You are required to notify Child Protection each time you become aware of any further reasonable grounds for your belief.
2. You do not have to be able to prove that the child has been abused to notify Child Protection.
3. If the Principal does not share your belief that a child or young person is in need of protection, you must still notify Child Protection of your belief. However, staff should inform the Principal that they have made a report.

Recognise and Respond

Individual teachers should make observations and keep note of the concerns that have led them to form the belief that a report may be necessary. It may assist teachers to think in terms of reporting a behaviour or a series of behaviours and a concern or a series of concerns rather than reporting an individual family.

1. These concerns should be discussed, in the first instance, with the Principal.
2. It should then be decided who else, if anyone, should be informed. The need for confidentiality should be remembered at all times in the interests of the student and family. Only where the welfare of the student will be affected should the matter be discussed with anyone else.

3. It is important that the recommended procedures are followed to support and protect the child at risk.
4. All teaching staff will be given regular training on Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse procedures.

Gathering information

Action	Details
Make notes	Record your observations, and date and sign the entries
Continue to observe	Record your observations, and date and sign the entries
Consult colleagues	Access support and advice from your colleagues, compare notes and brainstorm possible strategies to address areas of concern
Develop action plans based on service procedures	Understand and consult the policies and procedures of North-Eastern Montessori School when determining what action to take
Talk to other agencies about helping the family	Collaborate with or engage community health services, local government services, Child FIRST, regional Department of Human Services/Child Protection officers and disability services. You may wish to instigate a case meeting
Talk to the child	Do this with respect for the child or young person's need for privacy and confidentiality
Talk to the parents/guardians	Only do this when it will not jeopardise the safety of the child or young person

Signs or indicators of harm

- Physical signs of abuse or neglect may include, but are not limited to, bruises, burns, sprains, bites, cuts, fractures, frequent hunger, malnutrition, poor hygiene and inappropriate clothing.
- Behavioural signs of abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) or neglect may include, but are not limited to, wariness or distrust of adults, fear of parents/guardians and of going home, fear when other children cry/shout, excessive friendliness to strangers, being very passive and/or compliant, having/claiming to have headaches and/or stomach pains, displaying sexual behaviour that is unusual for the child's age, frequent rocking, sucking and biting, having difficulty sleeping, being withdrawn, aggressive and/or demanding, being highly anxious, having delayed speech, acting like a much younger child, and often being tired and falling asleep.
- Disclosures by the child concerned, or by other parties.

Reporting

- There are two types of notifications to be made in relation to significant concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child: a referral to Child FIRST (Family Services) or a report to Child Protection.
- To report concerns that are life threatening, ring Victoria Police on 000.
- To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit, call the nearest DHS office in your region during business hours. To report concerns after hours or on weekends, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours, 7 days a week and toll free within Victoria). Note:

this is an emergency service for weekends and after hours only, and cases reported to the Child Protection Crisis Line will be referred to the relevant DHS office on the following working day.

- Provide the following information:
 - the child's name, age and address
 - the reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect
 - the reason why the call is being made at this point in time
 - an assessment of immediate danger to the child/ren (the person making the report may be questioned regarding knowledge of the current location of the alleged abuser/s)
 - a description of the injury or behaviour observed
 - the current location of the child
 - knowledge of other services that support or are involved with the family
 - any other information about the family
 - any specific details that will help the child, such as cultural background, need for an interpreter or disability support requirements.
- A notification should still be made, even if the notifier does not have all the necessary information.

Making a report to Child FIRST

A report to **Child FIRST** should be considered if, after taking into account the available information, the staff member forms a view that raising their concerns will have a low-to-moderate impact on the child, and that the immediate safety of the child will not be compromised. This may include circumstances when there are:

- significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child's development
- family conflict, including family breakdown
- families under pressure, due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance misuse, disability or bereavement
- young, isolated and/or unsupported families
- families experiencing significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child's care or development.

Child FIRST provides a consolidated intake service to Family Services within sub-regional catchments. Child FIRST ensures that vulnerable children, young people and their families are linked effectively into relevant services, and this may be the best way to connect children, young people and their families with the services they need.

Making a report to Child Protection

A report to **Child Protection** should be considered if, after taking into account all of the available information, the staff member forms a view that the child is in need of protection because:

- the harm or risk of harm has a serious impact on the child's immediate safety, stability and/or development
- the harm or risk of harm is persistent and entrenched, and is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, stability and/or development
- the child's parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect the child or young person from harm.

Upon receipt of a credible report, Child Protection will seek further information, often from professionals who may already be involved with the child or family, to determine whether further action is required. In determining what steps to take, Child Protection will also consider any concerns previously reported with regard to the child or young person. In most circumstances, Child Protection will inform the notifier of the outcome of investigations.

In considering a duty of care to report concerns of child abuse and/or neglect, it is important to remember that:

- it is not necessary to prove that abuse has taken place, only to provide reasonable grounds for the belief
- permission from parents/guardians or caregivers is not required to make a notification, nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being or has been made
- if a notification is made in good faith, the notifier cannot be held legally liable for any consequences, regardless of the outcome of the notification
- the identity of the notifier will remain confidential unless the notifier chooses to inform the child and/or family, or if the notifier consents in writing to the disclosure of their identity, or if the court decides that this information must be disclosed
- the notifier may have an ongoing role, including:
 - acting as a support person in interviews with the child or young person
 - attending a case conference
 - participating in case-planning meetings
 - continuing to monitor the child's behaviour and their interactions with others
 - observing/monitoring the conditions of a protective court order that may relate to access or contact with a parent/guardian
 - liaising with other professionals and child protection officers in relation to a child or young person's wellbeing
 - providing written reports for case-planning meetings or court proceedings in relation to the child's wellbeing or progress.

If, following a report to either agency, a family approaches the School, it is recommended that any interview be conducted with a minimum of two school staff members present (e.g. the Principal and one other, not necessarily including the reporting staff member/s) to provide support in what could be a difficult situation. The focus of such a meeting should be the welfare of the student not on justifying the actions of the teacher/s involved.

Support for the reporting teacher/s and the student that is the cause for concern and anyone else affected should be arranged if necessary. The school should be aware that a wide range of people may be affected. Support should continue to be provided if necessary, as the role of the teacher with the student and Department of Human Services Child Protection may be ongoing.

A registered school teacher or principal can seek advice from or make a referral to Child FIRST if they have a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child and where the immediate safety of the child is not compromised. The teacher or Principal should share relevant information with Child FIRST to help them complete their assessment of the referral. Contact should be made with the nearest Child FIRST office for information and advice.

A reporter may wish to keep their identity confidential when they make a referral to Child FIRST or a report to Child Protection, or when they share information with these agencies. A Child FIRST or Child

Protection worker cannot disclose the identity of the person making a referral or report without their consent.

If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member, principal or any other person employed by the School, contact should be made in the first instance with the Principal but if this is not appropriate, then with the MMS Board Chair.

Contact Details

For Mandatory Reporting Child Protection Department of Human Services Eastern Metropolitan Region 883 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill 3128 Tel: (03) 9213 2111 1300 360 391 (Intake) After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services Tel: 131 278 24 Hours/7 days per week	For Referrals & Community Support ChildFIRST North East Tel: 03 9450 0955 Fax: 03 9457 6057 Email: childfirst@cps.org.au Website: http://www.cps.org.au/access-our-services/childfirst/
--	--

Guidelines for the recruitment of staff and volunteers⁵

The processes for the recruitment and selection of employees, contractors and volunteers demonstrate our commitment to maximising the safety of children and deterring unsuitable and inappropriate persons from attempting to work at North-Eastern Montessori School. North-Eastern is committed to the following processes.

Preparation for recruitment

- An explicit statement of our commitment to child safety is included in all advertising promotion for the organisation.
- Job advertisements clearly state our commitment to child safety.
- Job descriptions include a statement about our commitment to maintaining a child safe environment and clearly outline responsibilities and accountability.
- The selection process includes:
 - consideration of a Working with Children Check (and a criminal history record check, where appropriate)
 - confirmation of identity, which involves sighting an original birth certificate or extract, a driver's licence or a passport
 - verification of qualifications
 - thorough reference checks: at least two referees are contacted (including the current or most recent employer) in person or via telephone and all referees must have observed the applicant working with children first-hand.

⁵ Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

Interview process

- At least three people are on the interview panel including, where possible, a gender mix and a person external to the service or someone with HR/interviewing experience.
- Questions are behavioural-based and ask the interviewee to provide examples of their past behaviour in specific situations relevant to the job being applied for.
- Questions regarding relationships with children, professional boundaries, resilience and motivation, teamwork, accountability and ethics are values-based.
- Questions are based on key selection criteria.
- Candidates are asked about their attitudes, aspirations and motivations.
- More detail is asked for when answers seem incomplete.

Ongoing management

- Information provided to the employee on commencing work at the service includes the *Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct Policy, Complaints and Grievances Policy*.
- The letter of offer includes a statement about what is expected of the staff member in terms of commitment and responsibilities for child safety.
- Orientation and induction covers information about values, attitudes, expectations and workplace practices in relation to maintaining a child safe environment.
- A mentoring or buddy system between employees is in place.
- Training and education with regard to child safety is provided for all employees, contractors and volunteers.
- Resources and support are provided for all employees, contractors and volunteers to ensure a child safe environment.

Employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors are treated with respect.

Child safety risk assessment⁶

A child protection risk assessment process helps in the identification of the potential for child abuse and enables appropriate strategies to be developed to minimise risk.

It is important to create awareness among employees, contractors, visitors and volunteers of possible risks to children from abuse, and how to implement a range of strategies to protect children from these risks.

Risk factors	Strategies to reduce risk	Evaluation
Appointment of a sex offender	Recruitment processes	Recruitment processes have been developed that include running all relevant criminal history and working with children related checks.
Opportunities for a child to be isolated within the program/premises	Maintaining staff to student ratios; staff reviewing supervision and sight lines of children in play areas	

⁶ Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Opportunities for a child to be taken away from the program/premises	School gate and strong supervision of children	
Close physical contact with an adult other than an educator	All volunteers, contractors and staff to apply for a WWCC	
Physical environment	Daily checks and maintenance checks of outdoor areas, buildings and office spaces	
High staff turnover	Strong induction processes and staff mentoring program	
Limited staff turnover (with little outside scrutiny of the program)	Regular training for staff and collaborative meetings to review safety procedures	
Unauthorised access by other people to the service (such as strangers or non-custodial parents)	All staff obtaining access to SENTRAL with the approved parties with permission for pick up	
Staff not recognising signs of abusive behaviour	Yearly mandatory reporting for all staff at North-Eastern	
Staff not raising concerns/suspicions of abuse	Knowledge of policy and responsibilities of staff communicated on a regular basis	
Low levels of awareness of child protection issues	Consultations between Registrar and staff where needed upon enrolment	
Low levels of commitment to preventing abuse by management/staff	Yearly mandatory reporting training for all staff at North-Eastern	
Lack of appropriate incident management procedures	All behaviour or wellbeing captured on the Wellbeing Module of SENTRAL	
Access to multimedia and information technology	High levels of cyber security on all student computers; all primary age children to use School desktop computers	

Legislation and Standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

1. Duty of Care

Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 (Vic.)

- a. Ministerial Order 870 January 2016 (Vic.)
- b. Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards: mandated registration requirements
- c. Crimes Act 1958 (amended) (Vic.)
- d. Betrayal of Trust Report 2014 (Vic.)

e. Working With Children Act 2005.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic), as amended 2011

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Vic): Sections 165, 166, 167

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Vic): Regulations 84, 85, 86, 99, 100, 101, 102, 168(2)(h)

Key definitions

Aboriginal	The term 'Aboriginal' in this policy refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples
Child	The term 'child' in this policy refers to any student enrolled at Northe-Eastern.
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. ⁷
Child Safety Concern	<p>A Child Safety concern is any concern relating to the physical emotional or cultural safety of a child with whom the Commission has contact, either directly or indirectly. It includes, but is not limited to, allegations or suspicions of child abuse.</p> <p>A Child's safety concerns may include for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate or special relationships developing between an adult and a child (that may indicate grooming behaviour) • Inadequate staff-child supervision ratios • Feeling of discomfort about interactions between an adult and a child • Concerns about a physical environment that poses a risk for children (including health and hygiene) • Concerns about a child being denied their right to culture and identify or other discriminating practice • Any action or inaction that demonstrates non-adherence to the Commission's Child Safe policy or Code of Conduct <p>Child Safety concerns, including suspected child abuse, may be identified through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a suspicion or belief that abuse or harm has or is likely to occur • a disclosure made by a child, their parent, an external agency or any other person • observations of concerning changes in a child's behaviour or presentation • observations of concerning behaviour about a person's conduct towards or in the presence of a child.
Child abuse⁸	<p>Defined as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. sexual abuse and grooming ii. physical violence; iii. serious emotional or psychological harm; or

⁷ As defined in Ministerial Order 870.

⁸ As defined in Ministerial Order 870. The Ministerial Order states that this definition explicitly goes beyond child sexual abuse.

	iv. serious neglect of a child.
Children's rights	Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have a number of rights including the right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be treated fairly • have a say about decisions affecting them • live and grow up healthy • have people who do what is best for them • know who they are and where they come from • believe what they want to believe • privacy • find out information and express themselves • be safe no matter where they are • be cared for and have a home • education, play and cultural activities • help and protection if they need it.
Oppressive behaviour and language	Oppressive behaviour is considered actions or language used that is unjustly harsh or tyrannical.
School environment	means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the governing board for use by a child during or outside school hours, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a campus of the school; ^[1]_[SEP] b. online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and ^[1]_[SEP] c. 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). ^[1]_[SEP]

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with this policy
- reporting any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the , Principal or his/her delegates
- abiding by the School's *Code of Conduct* and the School's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Volunteers and students on placement, while at the school, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the School will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice

- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required, and following an incident

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Child safe organisations
- Appendix 2: Child Safety Review Checklist
- Appendix 3: Child Safety Concern Report
- Appendix 4: Child Safety Code of Conduct

APPENDIX 1

Child safe organisations⁹

This table provides some examples of practices that may be implemented to support the principles of a child safe organisation.

Child safe principle	Practices
The organisation welcomes children, their parents/guardians and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators, staff, volunteers and students readily interact with children in an age-appropriate and respectful way • Children are treated as individuals: educators and volunteers strive to understand each child's particular interests and needs • Educators, staff, students and volunteers listen to children and encourage their participation
The organisation recognises that children are vulnerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators, staff, students and volunteers accept it is their role to protect children involved with their organisation • Educators, staff, students and volunteers accept there is a difference in power between a child and an adult • The service maintains appropriate educator-to-child ratios • Policies are in place to minimise risk involved in one-to-one situations between a child and an adult • Equipment and activities are appropriate for the ability and age of the children • Children are supported and comforted in an appropriate way, consistent with the child's wishes • Information about children is treated confidentially
The organisation recognises and responds to children with additional needs, including disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service is accessible to all children • Educators, staff, students and volunteers relate to all children in a respectful and developmentally-appropriate manner • Policies are in place to guide the physical and psychological care requirements of all children
The organisation actively encourages the participation of Aboriginal children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators, staff, students, volunteers and other children acknowledge and show respect for Aboriginal culture • Policies acknowledge that an Aboriginal child's cultural identity is fundamental to their overall wellbeing
The organisation recognises, and responds to, the particular needs of children from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural diversity is welcomed and celebrated • Activities offered are representative of the cultural and religious mix of the local community • Educators, staff, students, volunteers and other children acknowledge and show respect for diversity
The organisation encourages children to participate in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are asked their views, and these views are respected and taken into consideration in decision-making • Children are involved in discussing appropriate behaviour
The organisation carefully recruits and manages its employees, contractors and volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service has policies on staff and volunteer recruitment and management, covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – recruitment processes, including skills and qualifications required

⁹ Attachment 2 is based on principles for creating child safe organisations, as developed by the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, Victoria.

Child safe principle	Practices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – background-checking and screening processes for all employees, contractors and volunteers – Working with Children Checks and police checks • The School has a <i>Code of Conduct & Child Safety Code of Conduct</i> that outlines acceptable behaviour by educators, staff, students, volunteers and contractors • There is a clear and accessible complaints procedure for use by children, parents/guardians and employees • Parents/guardians can access the service policies on request
<p>The organisation ensures that its commitment to child safety is clear and shared by all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child protection policy (such as this <i>Child Safe Environment Policy</i>) is in place and accessible • Educators, staff, students, volunteers, contractors and parents/guardians are aware of the service's child protection policy
<p>The organisation ensures employees, contractors and volunteers are informed about child safety and receive training, where appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service has a clear staff development policy that includes areas of child development, child protection, risk management and safety

APPENDIX 2

Child safety review checklist¹⁰ (Staff Only)

This checklist will assist organisations to identify risks and issues in relation to the protection of children, and the requirements for appropriate amendments to be made to a service's policy and practices, or training and support for staff.

	Child safe standard question	Yes, describe how	No or only partly, describe what needs to be done	Person responsible for any action required	Timeline and review date
Clear and public commitment to child safety	Is there a child protection policy (such as this <i>Child Safe Environment Policy</i>) for the service?				
	Have employees, contractors and volunteers read and understood the policy?				
	Are parents/guardians made aware of this policy on enrolment of their child at the service?				
Children's rights to safety and participation	Are children welcomed, consulted and respected at the service?				
	Are the indoor and outdoor environments physically safe?				
	Is a safety assessment conducted for all activities?				
	Do service programs stimulate children and meet their physical, emotional, intellectual, social and recreational needs?				

¹⁰ Attachment 4 is based on a checklist created by the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (OCSC). The OCSC checklist can be downloaded at www.kids.vic.gov.au/downloads/childsafes_organisation.pdf

	Child safe standard question	Yes, describe how	No or only partly, describe what needs to be done	Person responsible for any action required	Timeline and review date
	Are children with additional needs and from different backgrounds encouraged to participate? If so, do they actually participate?				
Employment of staff and volunteers	Are there adequate screening procedures for staff, volunteers and students on placement?				
Support for staff and volunteers	Is there a code of conduct policy that explains the acceptable and unacceptable behaviours of parents/guardians, volunteers and students at the service?				
	Are employees aware of the risk of harm to children and the different types of harm (refer to <i>Definitions</i>)?				
Reporting a child safety concern	Do staff understand and feel confident about the process for reporting and acting on concerns about child safety?				
	Have staff identified any other support, assistance and resources they feel they need to assist in providing a child safe environment?				

Appendix 3: Child Safety Concern Report

Incident details

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence

Sexual offence

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious neglect

Please describe the incident (attach additional documentation as needed)

When and where did it take place?	
Who was involved?	
What did you see?	

Other information	

To whom has the incident been reported and what action will be taken?

Child protection (please provide name of Child Protection Officer, date and time of report)	
Police (please provide Police Station, name of officer and date/time of report)	
The Principal (Principal to sign)	
Another third party (please specify):	
Follow Up Actions:	

Appendix 4 Child Safe Code of Conduct

The Child Safe Code of Conduct applies to all areas of the School, including the use of digital technology and social media. All staff, volunteers and contractors must:

- Adhere to the School Child Safe Policy at all times
- Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm
- Treat everyone with respect
- Work to prevent discrimination and actively promote the participation and inclusion of all children and young people, recognising in particular:
 - The cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people
 - The cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - The safety of children and young people with a disability
 - Gender diversity and the safety of same sex attracted young people
- Modelling appropriate adult behaviour
- Listening to children and young people and responding to their needs appropriately
- Reporting any allegation of child abuse to the Principal and ensuring any child criminal matters are referred to Victoria Police
- Working with children in an open and transparent way; other adults should always know about the work you are doing with children
- Encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in matters that are important to them

All staff, volunteers and contractors must not:

- Seek to use children in any way to meet the needs of adults
- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicious or disclosures of child abuse or harm
- Use discriminatory or oppressive behaviour or language with children
- Engage in rough physical games
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, religion, disability, vulnerability, sexuality or other protected attributes under the *Equal Opportunity Action 2010*
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves, such as toileting changing clothes
- Develop 'special' relationships with specific children or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- Exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking site or email addresses with children
- Have unauthorised contact with children and young people in person, online or by phone.

I, _____, agree to the Child Safe Code of Conduct and commit to Child Safety at North-Eastern Montessori School.

Signature

Date