

Rationale:

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:

- the principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and
- the actions the school proposes to take to:

i. demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy;

ii. support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and

iii. support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

All children who attend Katandra School have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in the school's care is our first priority. The management, members of staff and volunteers of Katandra School have a zero tolerance to child abuse. The school aims to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun.

Children with a disability can be vulnerable to abuse. Reasons for this include:

- communication difficulties
- personal care requirements
- limited provision of developmentally appropriate sexual and relationship information
- social isolation.

Aims:

To demonstrate the strong commitment of the management, members of staff and volunteers to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies and practices the school has developed to keep everyone safe from any harm, including abuse.

Guidelines:

The school recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and will use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, the school will proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

Implementation:

Supporting staff and volunteers

Katandra School seeks to attract and retain the best staff and volunteers. The school provides support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. The school has developed a Code of Conduct (refer to Appendix 1) to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code.

Reporting a belief

Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse

A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

Mandated staff members (*Teachers and Principals*) must make a report to Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection.

Staff members, **whether or not mandated**, need to report to the principal or leading teacher their belief when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report.

Please refer to the Mandatory Reporting Policy 2014 for procedures in response to allegations of child abuse.

These procedures do not:

- prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school;
- state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;
- require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of child abuse; or
- prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies:
- *Mandatory Reporting Policy 2014*
- *Student Engagement Policy 2014*
- *Duty of Care Policy 2014*

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The Principal and the Leading teacher have the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children with safety concerns. The complaints procedures are outlined in the Katandra School policy titled Complaints.

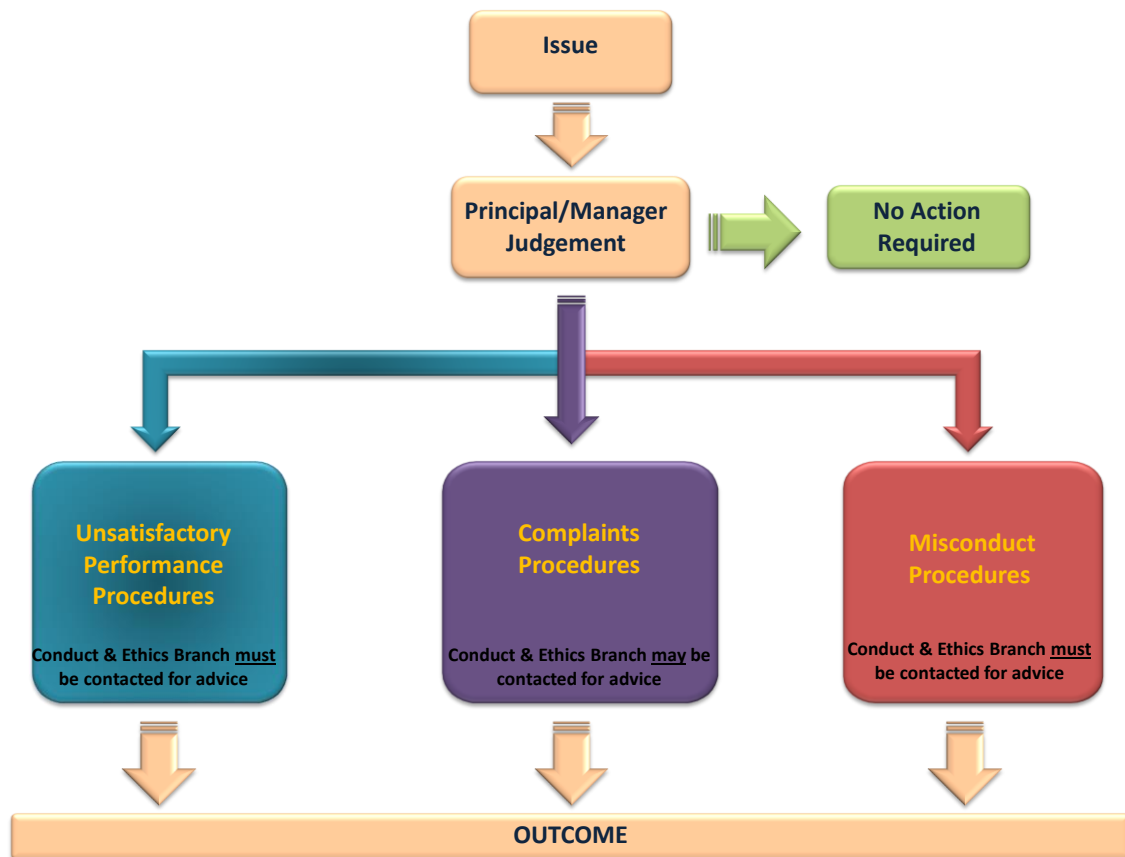
Examples of child safety concerns include:

- concerns about a physical environment that may pose a risk to children (this includes health and hygiene issues)
- inappropriate or special relationships developing between members of staff or volunteers and children
- inadequate staff-child supervision ratios
- breaches of the Code of Conduct, particularly if they are persistent
- feelings of discomfort about interactions between a staff member or volunteer and a child
- suspicions or beliefs that children are at risk of harm
- observations of concerning changes in behaviour
- children's disclosures of abuse or harm, which must be reported to Child Protection or the police.

In determining the appropriate action, the principal/manager, subject to satisfying any legal or policy requirements, should refer to the Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance Guidelines.

The Department's Conduct & Ethics Branch will provide advice and assistance to principals/managers on the appropriate course of action to take. The Branch can be contacted on 9637 2595 or by email at conduct.ethics@edumail.vic.gov.au. In relation to a particular issue or incident, the principal/manager

will need to make an assessment as to the appropriate course of action to take as illustrated below:



Where the principal/manager has formed a view that there may be grounds for action under Division 10 of Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, the Conduct & Ethics Branch will, in accordance with the misconduct processes, advise on the next steps.

The principal/manager must ensure that persons affected by the alleged misconduct are provided with appropriate support, such as referring them to the Department's Employee Assistance Program for counselling.

Evaluation

This policy will be re-evaluated every three years or when Government policy necessitates an update due to a change in regulations

Certification

Signed..... Date.....

School Council President

Signed Date.....

Principal

This policy ratified at School Council meeting