

SAFETY AT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

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Children have the right to be safe and protected, including at school. It is important that you feel confident that your child is safe and well in the care of their school.

Schools are responsible for keeping children safe. Schools have to meet legal requirements for the care, safety and welfare of students. From 1 August 2016, they also need to meet child safe standards to achieve a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse.

This information sheet provides information for parents about the child safe standards and how your school must protect children from child abuse.

What information should your school provide to you?

From 1 August 2016, schools must inform the school community about the following:

- strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school, and roles and responsibilities within the school for achieving these strategies
- the school's child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

You can ask to see these things. You could also ask to see the school's:

- code of conduct outlining clear expectations for appropriate behaviour by school staff with children (this must be publicly available)
- strategies to promote child empowerment and participation, e.g. delivering appropriate education about standards of behaviour for students attending the school, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), resilience and child abuse awareness and prevention
- procedures for reporting suspected child abuse (this must be publicly available).

If you believe the school could take a stronger approach to child safety, whether for all children or to meet your child's specific needs, speak to the principal or someone in a leadership role at the school.

If you wish to make a formal complaint that the school is not meeting the child safe standards, you will first need to make a complaint directly to the school. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint to the school, you can make a formal complaint. More information about making a complaint is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au.

Victoria's child safe standards

In 2013, the Victorian Parliament held an Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations, resulting in the Betrayal of Trust Report.

The report found that more could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety. In response, the Victorian Government is phasing in child safe standards for organisations that work with children, including schools.

What are the standards?

The child safe standards require schools to consider all aspects of child safety and put measures in place to protect children from all forms of abuse, including:

- sexual or grooming offences
- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect.

Below are the seven child safe standards. The Minister for Education has set out in Ministerial Order No. 870 what specific actions schools need to take to meet the child safe standards.

Standard Number	What is required in each school?
1.	Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety.
2.	A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety.
3.	A child safety code of conduct.
4.	School staff selection, supervision and management practices for a child-safe environment.
5.	Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse.
6.	Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.
7.	Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation.
All standards	School governing authorities must take account the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and children who are vulnerable (schools only).

For more information about Victoria's child safe standards and schools, visit www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe.