



AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Advancement
Determination
Faith

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY CHILD SAFE POLICY

Last Review Date: June 2020

Review Date: June 2022

Date Ratified by AIA Board: June 2020

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Ministerial Order No 870 is a key part of the Victorian Government's response to the recommendations of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. The Inquiry's Betrayal of Trust report made a number of recommendations aimed at protecting children from all forms of abuse and neglect. In particular, Recommendation 12.1 of the Betrayal of Trust report recommended that the government implement minimum standards for maintaining 'child-safe environments' for all organisations with direct and regular contact with children.

The new minimum Child Safe Standards which aim to create child safe cultures and environments in organisations that work with children were released by the Government. These standards are required to be implemented and enforced in Victorian schools. The Ministerial Order provides what the Child Safe Standards mean in a school environment, and demonstrates the Government's "zero tolerance" for child abuse in Victorian schools.

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence
- a grooming offence; or
- the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect.

THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS ARE:

1. strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
2. a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
3. a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
4. screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
5. processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

LEGAL AND REGULATORY BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE

- Duty of Care
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 (Vic.)
- Ministerial Order 870 January 2016 (Vic.)
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards: mandated registration requirements
- Crimes Act 1958 (amended) (Vic.)
- Betrayal of Trust Report 2014 (Vic.)
- Working With Children Act 2005.

RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE: A Template for all Victorian Schools

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Responding_TemplateSchools.pdf

All Child Safety incident reports must be stored securely with the Head of Campus & Student Welfare Coordinator.

PURPOSE AND COMMITMENTS

- Australian International Academy (AIA) will comply with Ministerial Order 870 and commits to child safety. AIA child safe policy applies to all school environments, which includes physical and online environments.
- AIA has zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.
- AIA want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- AIA will ensure that a culture of child safety is embedded and the commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse will be led by the Academy Board and Campus Heads, and be shared throughout the school community.
- AIA has legal obligations to adhere to all legislative requirements, especially: The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) - Mandatory reporting Obligations, and the three new criminal offences that have been introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (see legislative responsibilities)
- AIA is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- We value and empower students to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
- We foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
- We take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.
- AIA will employ only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development.
- AIA will 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.

- AIA will report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities, as prescribed by the Mandatory Reporting Policy.
- AIA will share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.
- We value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.
- AIA staff and volunteers will be aware of key policies involving child safety in particular, the child-safe policy, Staff code of conduct, Mandatory Reporting, Anti Bullying and Incident Reporting policies.
- AIA will address all 7 child safe standards provided by The Ministerial Order 870, and have zero tolerance for child abuse in our campuses.
- AIA is committed to regularly training and educating its staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- AIA support and respect all children, as well as its staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- AIA has other policies, procedures and training in place that support our Campus Heads, Assistant Heads, coordinators, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

ACADEMY BOARD RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure AIA has appropriate strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements. The Board will ensure that policies, procedures and culture is in place to safeguard against the risk of child abuse, respond effectively if abuse is suspected or confirmed; and to have zero tolerance of child abuse.

The AIA Board through Campus Heads will ensure that AIA:

- develop and implement strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the Academy;
- 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.

CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY AT THE ACADEMY

The AIA Board through the leadership of each Campus Head will ensure that AIA will embed culture of child safety in each campus.

Campus Head is responsible for overall leadership at each campus involving Child Safety. Campus Head will delegate tasks as required to Assistant Heads of Campus, Student Management Coordinators, Student Counsellors or any other suitably qualified coordinator and senior member of staff.

Procedures for embedding a culture of child safety:

1. Provide training in recognizing and responding to child abuse for all staff and volunteers. Induction period at the beginning of each year to be used to train staff on the policy and provide plenty of question-and-answer time to work through the practical components of how people report concerns as they arise
2. Review and include child safe policy components into duty statements of Student Management Coordinators, Student Counsellors and other coordinators and senior staff as required.
3. Include child safety in the staff appraisal.
4. Maintain adequate records of child safety issues (ensuring the keeping of such records & respect privacy).
5. Institute improvements to child safety policies and procedures as a regular agenda item at Senior Staff meetings and staff meetings.
6. Publicly communicate AIA's stance on child safety on AIA website, in annual report, and via recruitment advertisements. Clearly communicate child safety policy and other related policies and procedures to all staff, volunteers, children and families and publish policies for child safety on the AIA website and newsletters.
7. Communicate child-safe statement in community languages, ensuring that it is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
8. Ensure that child-safe information is accessible for people with a disability.
9. Update and regularly review staff code of conduct, include a statement about AIA's zero tolerance with regards to child safety and consequences to not abiding with staff code of conduct.
10. Annual training of staff and volunteers on the Child Safe code of conduct.
11. Require staff and volunteers (and all those working with children) to access and read the Child Safe Code of Conduct and abide by it.
12. Put in place screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.
13. Ensure that all potential applicants are aware of AIA's commitment to child safety, zero tolerance to child abuse and Staff code of conduct.
14. Apply a stringent recruitment process to all appointments for roles that involve working with children, and make certain that teachers are VIT registered, and working with children/police and reference checks are current.
15. When hiring or appointing personnel ensure that they have a fulsome understanding of child safety and the relevant reporting protocols, and that they respect Aboriginal culture, cultural and linguistic diversity and the needs of children with a disability.
16. Have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
17. Ensure a supportive environment for children, staff, volunteers or families who report allegations of abuse or child safety concerns.
18. Train staff, volunteers, families and children on AIA's reporting procedures so that they know how to report abuse allegations, and to whom.
19. Train staff and volunteers on how to identify signs of risk to children.
20. Ensure that those handling complaints understand when to notify authorities including the police and child protection, of suspected child abuse.
21. Publicise the ways in which people can report concerns, tailoring messages for children and families and if necessary providing information in a variety of languages.
22. Provide support and comfort to a child reporting abuse or safety concerns, and ensure that a child is never blamed or interrogated.

23. Provide ongoing support to all participants in the investigation (including the alleged perpetrator) and also ensure that all participants are aware of any counselling services available to them.
24. Regularly review processes and policies and seek feedback on them to ensure that they are working to serve the interests of children.
25. Have strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.
26. Ensure that the risk management program includes a process designed to evaluate risks posed to children.
27. Provide children, including children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability, with accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights and how they can raise concerns about abuse – e.g. through information sheets, websites and social media.
28. Assist children to understand their right to make decisions about their body and their privacy through age-appropriate training carried out by child safety professionals such as child psychologists.
29. Gather feedback from children about AIA child-safe policies and processes and seek input on whether they would feel safe to raise concerns. Implement improvements based on this feedback.
30. Train staff and volunteers on methods of empowering children and encouraging children’s participation.
31. Encourage participation and empowerment of children in a range of organisational activities (not just that relating to child safety), such as organisational planning and decision making.
32. Raise awareness in the organisation and the community about children’s rights.

STUDENTS AND THEIR SAFETY

This policy is intended to empower our students who are vital and active participants in our schools. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. At AIA we have student leaders which consists of School Captaincy team, SRC members and/or Class Captains. Student leaders are actively involved in providing feedback from students to management and vice versa to make our schools safe for all children.

We value and promote diversity and tolerance in our schools, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

At AIA campuses we have a leadership team which consists of Head of Campus, Assistant Heads, Student Management Coordinators, Counsellors, Form teachers and Class/Subject teachers. Students are encouraged to approach any one of the leadership team or teachers to raise any issues or concerns they may have about their own wellbeing or the wellbeing of other students. These channels of communication are explained regularly at various assemblies and via school publications.

Participation and Empowerment of Children

At the Australian International Academy we highly value and encourage the participation and empowerment of our students in matters of concern to them. We believe strongly in student voice to guide the work we do in to keep them safe on school grounds and off school grounds.

The following steps must be taken:

- Encourage students to participate in (age appropriate) child friendly discussions around their safety and wellbeing. Be realistic about the boundaries of a discussion and what can change.
- Listen to student voice and viewpoints. Acknowledge and take seriously their views.
- Be clear about the boundaries and confidentiality if issues are to be made public.
- Monitor the discussion forum to gauge students' emotional and social well-being. If any student/s become distressed a result of discussion and/or disclosure the following **steps must be followed:**
 1. Remove the child to a comfortable setting with a trusted staff member (i.e. welfare coordinator, year level coordinator, school counsellor, school psychologist)
 2. Ask about the wellbeing of the child. Be aware of cultural sensitivities.
 3. Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
 4. Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
 5. Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
 6. Explain to student or parent AIA's processes of reporting to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
 7. Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
 8. Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
 9. If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.
 10. Ensure that activities are inclusive of a diverse range of students and that activities are engaging and fun (i.e. school camps, excursions, after hour's events, intercultural & inter-faith activities, school assemblies etc.)
 11. Provide students with feedback about how their views had informed the school's decision/s to improve student safety and well-being.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This policy and Staff code of Conduct guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our campuses.

All of our staff and volunteers must abide by our staff code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers are informed about the code of conduct which is located in a shared file named Policies on the school network and it is discussed and explained to all staff and volunteers at least once a year at the beginning of each school year. As part of induction of new staff and volunteers, the policy is also distributed and explained to all new staff and volunteers who commence during the year.

VISITORS & CONTRACTORS

This policy and Visitors policy will guide all visitors to AIA campuses. All non AIA workers and contractors for example builders, cleaners, trades people, couriers must abide with this policy.

This policy must be followed by all those who are in contact with children, which means all students at AIA Melbourne campuses.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our campuses understands that child safety is paramount and is everyone's responsibility.

AIA culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to Staff code of conduct regarding appropriate behaviour). Any inappropriate behaviour can be reported through Campus Head/Assistant Campus Head. Head of Campus will make a report to Victoria Police and to VIT, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter. Individual member of staff can also make a report as per Mandatory reporting policy.

RECRUITMENT

We take all reasonable steps to employ suitably qualified staff to work with students. Teaching staff must have VIT registration and non-teaching staff including volunteers must have current working with children check.

AIA has a selection criteria for selecting the most suitable person for the advertised position. AIA welcomes applicants from all backgrounds who would like to work in an Islamic School to provide high quality academic programs to students.

1. Staff Selection Procedures for New Applicants

1. Position is normally advertised online with SEEK, AIA website and/or other suitable mediums.
2. Applicants are short listed for an interview by a panel from the concerned Campus.
3. Composition of Selection Panel:
 - Teaching staff: Head of Campus and Assistant Head of Campus also if necessary, then a third panel member is included, which maybe the relevant Faculty Head, Senior teacher, HR rep., Timetabler, etc. (A Panel of 2 or 3).
 - Support/non-teaching staff : HR rep. Head of Finance , and other senior officers (A Panel of 2 or 3).
 - Selection of Campus Head : Panel formed by the Board. Panel may consist of Board members, Campus Head and the Head of AAQA. (A Panel of 2 or 3)
4. Interviews are conducted with a panel consisting of 2 to 3 senior staff.
5. Referees are contacted, online search is made.

6. A short list is recommended for the Head of Campus. If the appointment is for the position of Head of Campus then recommendation is given to Board.
7. Head of Campus conducts a second interview and makes the final decision.
8. In the case of appointing a campus head, the Panel for the second interview includes Panel formed by the Board. Panel may consist of Board members and Campus Head from one other campus.
9. HR Department prepares contract for the successful applicant.

2. Selection Criteria for teachers:

Following factors will be considered to select the most appropriate teacher: Qualifications, VIT registration, Feedback from referees, Knowledge of Curriculum and Assessment, Prepared to plan, Teaching Practise, Student Management Skills, Ability to work within a team, Professionalism, Responsibility and Dedication to Profession, Awareness of child safety policy/requirements and Mandatory Reporting obligations, Overall Presentation and Communication Skills.

3. Selection Criteria for Support/Non-Teaching Staff:

Following factors will be considered to select the most appropriate non-teaching staff: Qualifications, Relevant Experience, Working with children check, Feedback from referees, Knowledge of position applied for, Prepared to adapt and learn as required, Organisational & Management Skills, Ability to work within a team, Professionalism, Awareness of child safety policy/requirements and Mandatory Reporting obligations, Responsibility and Dedication to Profession, Overall Presentation and Communication Skills.

4. Induction for new staff:

- School organizer or Assistant Head to introduce new staff to relevant leaders and assign a mentor for the first year. The formal induction occurs on one of the two or three planning days at the beginning of the year or if the staff member is starting outside of that period, it may be conducted slightly differently but should include discussion on the following:
 - A new Staff Handbook (School Organiser/Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator)
 - Timetable, Yard Duty, Duty statement, Campus tour, Meeting Schedule etc. (School Organiser)
 - A set of keys, Pay, Tax and Superannuation information (Office Manager)
 - Access to campus network (IT Manager)
 - Curriculum and Assessment (Curriculum Leader/Faculty Leader/Team Leader)
 - A general discussion regarding AIA expectations, including our ethos, protocols and processes (Head of Campus/Assistant Head)
 - A presentation regarding policies that pertain to Child Safety, Child Safe Code of Conduct, student welfare, Attendance, other policies.
 - Each of these people will conduct regular meetings with new staff in the first six months of their employment, which coincides with the probationary period. Notes should be retained for any meetings in this period.

FAIR PROCEDURES FOR STAFF

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to staff. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our Incident Reporting Form. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as a school take.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

AIA takes its legal responsibilities seriously. All staff must be familiar with the following policies and must fully understand their legal responsibilities: Including

- Child Safe Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Mandatory Reporting Policy – (the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) - Mandatory reporting Obligations.
- The three new criminal offences that have been introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
 - failure to disclose offence, which requires adults to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child.
 - failure to protect offence, which applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but failed to do so.
 - grooming offence, which targets communication with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

AIA takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

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.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

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.

RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

The following process is to be utilised in case of an allegation of child abuse (child discloses an incident of abuse) or if a parent/carer raises a concern or allegation of abuse, which may have taken place in the school premises.

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to a staff member.

The following steps must be taken:

- Separate child/student from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use its own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, Head of Campus, Assistant Head/Head of School, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Head of Campus, Assistant Head/Head of School, Student Welfare coordinator and follow Mandatory reporting obligations. Head of Campus to report the incident to the Academy Board.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately on the incident form, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer reports their child has been abused in the school premises or raises a concern.

The following steps must be taken:

- Explain to parent AIA's processes of reporting to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as to the Head of Campus, Assistant Head/Head of School, police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
- Be sensitive to cultural and linguistic barriers. Provide an interpreter.

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local

Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

If student is with special needs provide support to help him/her explain the incident

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

Legal responsibilities

Every employee who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

Failure to disclose criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

More information about failure to disclose is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website
<www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

More information about mandatory reporting is available in the *Child protection manual*
<www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting>.

Mandatory reporters: Head of schools, teachers, office workers, support staff, school counsellors, psychologist, canteen worker, volunteer, cleaner, bus driver and maintenance people must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

Staff to refer to Mandatory Reporting policy for step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST.

RISK MANAGEMENT

This section is covered within the Child Safe Risk Management policy.

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

