



South East Network - Youth+ Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct

Policy number	SEN/PCSSWP/0117	Version	December 2017
Drafted by	Network Principal	Approved by	NP
Responsible person	Network Principal	Scheduled review date	December 2018

Introduction

South East Network Flexible Learning Centre’s hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic Education. Our commitment is drawn from the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel (CECV Commitment to Young person Safety).

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety within the South East Network Flexible Learning Centre’s:

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect;
- Our Flexible Learning Centre’s (FLC’s) work in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on young person safety and protection;
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers;
- All adults in our FLC’s, including teaching and non-teaching staff, placement students, volunteers, and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse;
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people;
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with the Church, governments, the police and human services agencies;
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect;
- Staff, placement students, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about young person safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership; and
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within NSW, Victoria and Tasmania.



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA



South East Flexi Schools Network

9 The Vaucluse
Richmond VIC 3121
[P] 0400 430 389
[W] www.youthplus.edu.au
ABN: 96 372 268 340

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of South East Network FLC's to the care, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people at our school/s.

This policy will also outline the procedures and strategies developed at the FLC's to keep children and young people safe from harm in our school community, this includes our mandatory reporting framework and child safety code of conduct.

This policy takes into 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. The safety, empowerment and participation of these individuals will be specifically promoted throughout this policy.

Policy

South East Network FLC's work at all times to protect children from any form of abuse by identifying, removing and reducing risks. We have a zero tolerance for child abuse, and our culture is embedded with child safety thinking and practice. This culture is achieved through proactive leadership, demonstrating our core values in attitudes and behaviours, as per our underpinning principles to child safety. All reasonable actions will be taken to build an environment where young people feel respected, empowered, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.

Youth+ promotes a child safe environment through a range of initiatives and strategies. A Code of Conduct has been established to outline clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children for all staff, volunteers, contractors and placement student's at our FLC's. We are committed to screen, supervise and train new and existing staff members to reduce the risk of child abuse from personnel. All staff in South East Network FLC's are mandatory reporters and are expected to follow the process for reporting as outlined in this policy.

AUTHORISATION

Chloe Hand
Network Principal, Youth+
December 2017

Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the **Network Principal** (or delegated authority) to implement this policy and monitor its performance.

It shall be the responsibility of the **Head of School/ Head of Campus** to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness and shared responsibility for young person safety. These responsibilities include:

- Creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe;
- Embedding a culture of child safety into the culture of the school;
- Take the lead in protecting children from abuse, and must be aware of all abuse allegations and risks and be responsible for the response;
- Upholding high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors;
- Promoting models of behaviour between adults, children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration;
- Ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff.
- Ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters;
- Providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to children and young people's protection and wellbeing; and
- Monitor overall compliance with this procedure and managing alternative procedures if need be.

It shall be the responsibility of **all FLC staff** (including volunteers, contactors, volunteers and placement students) to understand the important role he/ she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. These responsibilities include:

- Treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care;
- Respond appropriately to a young person who makes or is affected by an allegation of abuse. This includes following 'Reportable Conduct' guidelines below;
- Agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with young people. All staff and volunteers, as well as young people and families are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct;
- Providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of young people is nurtured;
- Undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people; and

- Assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse.

Reportable Conduct Schemes

Reportable Conduct Schemes operate in Victoria and New South Wales (no equivalent exists in Tasmania). It is the responsibility of Network Principals and Heads of School/Heads of Campus in each State to ensure the following guidelines are met in relation to reportable conduct.

For Victorian Schools Only – Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Head of School must notify the Commission for Children and Young People’s Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme in writing if or when they become aware of a reportable allegation against an employee of the entity. Notice must be given in writing in two stages: First, within 3 business days of becoming aware of the reportable allegation, and second, as soon as practicable and provide more detailed information within 30 days of becoming aware of the reportable allegation. The Head of Campus or Head of School should provide information as recommended by the Commission:

- Respond to a reportable allegation made against a worker by ensuring that allegations are appropriately investigated;
- Report allegations which may have involved criminal conduct to the police; and
- Notify the Commission of findings of the investigation when it has concluded.

For more information on this scheme please refer to the website of the Commission for Children and Young People.

For New South Wales Schools Only – Notifying reportable allegations and convictions

Under Section 25 of the NSW Ombudsman Act 1975, Network Principals must notify the NSW Ombudsman’s Office of reportable allegations and convictions of staff as soon as practicable and, in any event, within 30 days of becoming aware of them. Allegations of child abuse only fall within reportable conduct jurisdiction if the involved individual is an ‘employee’ of Youth+ at the time when the allegation becomes known by Youth +.

The formal notification can be made by completing and submitting the Ombudsman’s ‘Part A’ Notification form, attaching copies of all relevant documentation. A copy of this form is available on the Ombudsman’s website. Following notification Youth+ must respond to allegations by conducting an investigation, and undertaking any risk management or other action which may be required.

At the end of an investigation, Youth+ must provide the Ombudsman’s Office with a range of information, such as a final report and advice on any action taken as a result of the investigation. The Ombudsman’s Office has the power to directly investigate any reportable allegation, or to directly investigate an organisations’s handling of a reportable allegation. More information is available by visiting the NSW Ombudsman website.

Child Safety Procedures

Definitions:

Child: A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the school.

Child Abuse includes:

(a) Any act committed against a young person involving:

- a sexual offence;
- any other other criminal offence (such as grooming).

(b) The infliction, on a child, of:

- physical violence;
- serious emotional or psychological harm.

(c) Serious neglect of a child.

Child Safety: encompasses matters related to protecting all children from abuse, managing the risk of abuse, providing support to a young person at risk of abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Child neglect: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. (Safe Schools Hub)

Child physical abuse: Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a young person that results in harm to the young person. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour (Safe Schools Hub).

Child Protection: Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm (Safe Schools Hub).

Child sexual abuse: Any sexual activity between a young person under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can also be:

- Any sexual behaviour between a young person and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated;
- Any sexual behaviour between a young person and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion;
- Sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion;
- Non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a young person and another young person or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse (Safe Schools Hub).

Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria, Tasmanian and NSW who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a young person under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.

Failure to protect (Vic Only): People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Grooming: Befriending a young person and establishing an emotional connection with a young person, to lower their inhibitions with the object of sexual abuse.

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners (Safe Schools Hub).

Reasonable Belief: When staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

Reportable Allegation: means any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee has committed: Reportable conduct; or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct (whether or not the conduct or misconduct is alleged to have occurred within the course of the person's employment).

Reportable Conduct: means a) a sexual offence committed against, with, or in the presence of a child whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded or b) sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, or; c) physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, or; d) any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child or; e) significant neglect of a child.

School environment: means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a young person during or outside school hours, including:

- A campus of the FLC;
- Online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- Other locations provided by the school for a young person's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- Directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- A volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary);
- A minister of religion.

Guidelines

Fulfilling the roles in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a young person is at risk of abuse.

Identify, analyse and remove/reduce the risk of abuse

South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's operate from an attachment and trauma informed approach whereby all staff work to build professional and authentic relationships with all young people in their care.

- At the point of an enrolment, a thorough psychosocial assessment is completed; providing an understanding of the factors that may place the young person at risk of abuse or exploitative relationships.

- All young people are allocated to a class with a high student to staff ratio, with a key teacher and wellbeing worker. These workers are trained to recognise and respond to any risk of harm relating to the young person.
- Staff will speak regularly to parents/guardians/carers and other service providers to maintain an accurate picture of the young person's risk factors.
- Staff supervision, professional development and reflective practice are used to help staff recognise signs of abuse. Schools leaders also partake in regular development and networking events through the State Catholic Education Offices and EREA.

Removing identified risks - examples:

- Young people are allocated into programs which are broadly separated based on age.
- All employees/ contractors/ volunteers and placement students are screen and inducted onto site.
- There is secure access to the school site during the day, including a sign in/ sign out process.
- South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's have supervision and duty of care policies.

Choosing suitable employees and volunteers

South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's understand that when recruiting staff, we have ethical and legislative obligations. South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's takes reasonable steps to ensure that the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children are engaged. This process includes:

- Police record and identity checks. If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given opportunity to provide further information and context;
- Validating Working with Children Checks (or equivalent) for all prospective and current employees;
- Face to face interviews: We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities; and
- Detailed reference checks from previous employees to address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

Each position description for school staff will have a clear statement that sets out the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety (including this policy) and the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.

There is a process for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the Working with Young Children Check (or equivalent) and staff professional registration requirements.

- In Victoria, this registration is through the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

- In New South Wales, teacher accreditation is gained through the NSW Education Standards Authority.
- In Tasmania, Teacher Registration is through the Teacher Registration Board.

The details of the Working with Children Check (or equivalent) and Teacher Registration/ Accreditation are verified by the school's Senior Administration Officer at the point of employment and the following procedures are in place to monitor their continued currency:

- Expiry dates of the WWCC and teacher registration/ accreditation are monitored on a monthly basis;
- Staff are advised 30 days in advance of the expiry date that renewal must be completed prior to expiry. Follow up will occur to ensure that evidence of renewal is provided prior to expiry.
- If the staff member does not provide the required evidence by the expiry date, it will be assumed the teacher registration/ accreditation or WWCC has lapsed and the staff member will not be permitted to work with children, or at the school, until evidence of the currency of the registration is provided.

The Victorian Institute of Teaching, NSW Education Standards Authority or Teacher Registration Board will be notified if there is action taken against a teacher.

Supporting, training and enhancing performance of employees

Staff will have ongoing supervision and training to ensure that they know their responsibilities with children and reporting. They will be aware of the child safety code of conduct and their requirements under this policy, in particular mandatory reporting.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff, parents/carers and young people to feel confident and comfortable in discussing allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and detect potential signs of child abuse.

Staff will also be trained in how to protect from abuse and the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of students with a disability.

New staff will be supervised regularly to ensure that they understand the South East Network, Youth+ commitment to child safety as well as checking their behaviour is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Protective Services and Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Induction of staff

Induction is important in helping all people understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Staff at South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's receive an initial induction and then ongoing training around child safety. All staff will have signed our Code of Conduct.

Induction covers the following areas of young person safety:

- Identifying and assessing and reducing or removing child abuse risks;
- Our policies and procedures (including this policy and the code of conduct);
- Legislative requirements;
- How to handle or disclose a suspicion of abuse (Mandatory Reporting);

Supervision

South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's commit to having two staff members (where practical) present during activities with young people. Young people with a disability may require additional assistance.

New staff will be supervised regularly to ensure that they understand their role, as well as check that their behaviour is appropriate. Any warning signs should be reporting through appropriate channels.

Promoting Inclusion

South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's are inclusive to all children and families. In particular, we work to establish a culture that is:

- Culturally safe for Aboriginal children;
- Culturally safe for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, by using inclusive language and images in policy, professional documents and communications; and
- Safety for children with a disability, by ensuring South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's are accessible to everyone and ensuring appropriate training and supervision of staff and volunteers working with children with a disability.

Empowering and promoting the participation of young people in decision making

South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's promotes the involvement and participation of young people in developing and maintaining child safe environments. We encourage young people to express their views on our Child Safety Code of Conduct and incorporate this feedback into policy.

We always listen to young people and take them seriously, particularly if and when they are disclosing abuse of concerns for their safety or safety of other children and young people.

Fair procedures for personnel

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

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individual's involved, whether they be staff, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Please see Privacy Policy for further details.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints (Mandatory Reporting)

South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's take all allegations seriously. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations. All allegations should be reported to the Head of Campus/ Head of School or delegate for further action.

We work to ensure all children, families and staff know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, or if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales to protect children from harm relating to physical injury or sexual abuse. A young person, for mandatory reporting purposes, is 17 years old, or younger.

In South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's we report allegations or suspicions of abuse for all young people in our care. All staff in South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's are considered mandatory reporters.

If, in the course of carrying out their duties, a staff member forms a reasonable belief that a young person is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse, and that young person's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the young person, they must report that belief to Protective Services (DHHS – Vic, CSS – Tas, Com Services – NSW) and/or the Police, as soon as possible after forming the belief.

A subsequent report must be made on each occasion on which the staff member becomes aware of further reasonable grounds for the belief even if the reporter knows that another report has been made concerning the same young person and suspected abuse.

Forming a Reasonable Belief

Where school staff members are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. If a staff member has witnessed potentially abusive behaviour, has a suspicion or has received a disclosure of child abuse, they must determine whether these observations or receipt of such information has caused the staff member to form a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

A 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- A young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- Any person tells you that they believe someone has been abused; this may include a young person who is talking about themselves;
- You observe physical or behavioural indicators of abuse;
- A child or young person exhibits sexually abusive or age-inappropriate behaviour(s); and
- Professional observations of the young person's behaviour or development cause you to form a belief that the young person has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused.

While any indicators of possible child abuse or neglect are concerning, it is important to understand that the presence of a number of indicators that suggest either physical or sexual abuse of a young person may be sufficient to form a 'reasonable belief' in a mandatory reporter's mind which must be reported.

Criminal Offences Relating to Reporting or the Non-Reporting of Child Abuse

- *Failure to disclose offence* – VIC Only - which requires adults to report to the Police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a young person. Any school staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a young person under 16 must disclose that information to Victoria Police. This needs to happen as soon as it is practical to do so, except in limited circumstances where information has already been reported to Young person Protection.
- *Failure to protect offence* – VIC Only - which applies to people in positions of authority within organizations, who knew of a risk of young person sexual abuse by someone in the organization and failed to reduce or remove the risk. Any school staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer, sport coach or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a young person under 16, who is in the care or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to reduce or remove that

risk. This will include the Head of School or Head of Campus, and may also extend to youth workers/ social workers.

- *Grooming offence – VIC, NSW, TAS* - which targets communication with a young person or their parents with the intent of committing young person sexual abuse. The offence of grooming prohibits predatory conduct designed to prepare or 'groom' a young person for future sexual activity. The offence applies to communication with young children under 16 years. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails. The offence can be committed by any person aged 18 years or over. It does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

What to do if a young person discloses an incident of abuse, or if a parent/carer raises a concern or allegation of abuse which may have taken place in your organisation:

Report to your Head of School/ Head of Campus immediately. If Head of School/ Head of Campus are not available, staff should notify Network Principal immediately.

What to do if a young person discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- Try and separate them from the other young people discreetly and listen to them carefully;
- Let the young person use their own words to explain what has occurred;
- Reassure the young person 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 others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police;
- Do not make promises to the young person 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 young person in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them;
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the young person's words and report the disclosure to your Head of Campus/ Head of School or delegate, police or Child Protection; and
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their young person has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern:

- Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously;
- Ask about the wellbeing of the young person;
- 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 the organisation's management, the police or child protection;
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the young person safe;
- 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; and
- Report to your Head of School/ Head of Campus immediately. If Head of School/ Head of Campus are not available, staff should notify Network Principal immediately.

You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal young person, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal young people, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

Some young people with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, young people with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters.

Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, this may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the **Head of Campus/Head of School** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the Network Principal must be advised.

Where the Network Principal/s is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, EREA leadership must be advised.

Where **any other member of the school community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the school is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with other relevant policies.

Review of this Child Safety Policy

South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance. This policy will be reviewed every year and following significant incidents if they occur. We will take any recommendations or contributions from young people, parents/guardians seriously and work toward incorporating them into our policies. Where possible, we will do our best to work with local Aboriginal Communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

All staff and volunteers of South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children and young people by:

- Adhering to South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's Centre child safe policy at all times;
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect young people from abuse;

- Treating everyone with respect;
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of young people, particularly if they are telling you that they or another young person has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another young person;
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal young person's self-identification);
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities);
- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a young person;
- Reporting any allegations of young person abuse to Flexible Learning Centre leadership, and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection;
- If an allegation of young person abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the young person/s are safe; and
- Encouraging young people to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- Develop any 'special' relationships with young people that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific young people);
- Exhibit behaviours with young people which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps);
- Put young people at risk of abuse;
- Do things of a personal nature that a young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of young people (for example, personal social activities);
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of young people;
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of young people;
- Discriminate against any young person, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability;
- Have contact with a young person or their family outside of our organisation without the Head of Campus/Head of School's knowledge and/or consent. Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate;
- Have any online contact with a young person or their family (unless necessary, for example providing families with email updates) except as part of the use of a school's Facebook page – see Social Media Policy for further information; and
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed young person abuse.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to South East Network Flexible Learning Centre's leadership.

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

Annual Acknowledgement of Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct

To ensure all Youth+ employees and volunteers understand their responsibilities in relation to upholding child safety and abiding by the Youth+ Code of Conduct, all employees will be required to sign an annual acknowledgement that they have read and understood all Youth+ policies and procedures relating to child safety and code of conduct.

Related documents

- *South East Network, Youth+, Supervision Policy*
- *South East Network, Youth+, Pastoral Care Policy*
- *South East Network, Youth+, Volunteer's Policy*
- *South East Network, Youth+, Grievance and Complaints Procedures*
- *South East Network, Youth+, Recruitment Policy and Procedures*