

# What schools can do to protect against child sexual abuse: reflection tool

This resource is designed to help school principals and staff think through what they currently do to prevent child sexual abuse. The tool invites reflection on organisational capability, the capabilities of staff and volunteers, and the culture of the school and school community. The tool outlines some considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse in schools and provides a space for reflecting on the school's current actions, the current environment and what schools might do in future. Many of the action areas overlap or are repeated because building a protective environment and a positive school culture is a whole-school exercise. Not all the strategies listed here will be relevant or feasible in the short term, but the tool is intended to help school principals and school staff think about ways they can build a positive and protective environment.

## Organisational capability and policy

POLICY AND PRACTICE: THE PHYSICAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
<p><b>Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school has explicit policies and procedures for the prevention of child sexual abuse.</li><li>• The school has identified any risks to student safety posed by the physical environment of the school as well as any facilities that the school uses. This can include identifying areas:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• that are poorly supervised</li><li>• isolated</li><li>• where people from outside the school may have access to or be able to approach students.</li></ul></li><li>• The school has policies and procedures for actively controlling access to school facilities or facilities used by the school.</li><li>• The school has addressed risks posed by the physical school environment.</li></ul>		



POLICY AND PRACTICE: STAFF CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
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**Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse**

- There are enforceable codes of conduct for adults working or volunteering in schools. These clearly describe acceptable behaviour with regards to:
  - physical and non-physical (including online) contact and communication with students
  - reporting responsibilities
  - the role of adults in keeping children safe
- the role of school staff and volunteers in [safeguarding](#). Actions that promote child welfare and protect children from harm are part of the school's expectations of staff, a promoted leadership quality and a regular scheduled topic at staff meetings and in staff performance and development plans.
- Senior staff have specific responsibilities for helping ensure a whole-school approach to child welfare and safety.
- Codes of conduct and expected behaviours are regularly discussed in staff meetings and in informal discussion across the school to make sure they are an embedded part of school practice and culture.

POLICY AND PRACTICE: STAFF AND VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
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**Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse**

- Staff and volunteers are screened as part of recruitment to ensure they are suitable for working with children and have valid Working with Children checks.
- The results of screening checks are recorded in a central register.
- There is a comprehensive staff and volunteer induction process.
- New staff and volunteer induction includes clear communication about staff and volunteer codes of conduct and responsibilities to keep children safe (including protection against child sexual abuse and mandatory reporting).

POLICY AND PRACTICE: STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
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**Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse**

There is a policy for regular staff and volunteer training that includes an explicit focus on the prevention of child sexual abuse and the key elements of prevention. This training can include:

- the prevention of child sexual abuse
- appropriate and inappropriate child sexual behaviours
- how to deliver and support comprehensive sex and sexuality education
- how to deliver and support respectful relationships education
- understanding the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and students with disability
- online safety
- building a child-safe culture and environment.

There are accurate records (e.g. in a school training register) of which staff and volunteers have completed training (and when).



POLICY AND PRACTICE: PROCESSES FOR REPORTING CONCERNS	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
<p><b>Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are clear processes for school staff, volunteers, students and student families to report concerns about unsafe or harmful behaviours (including but not restricted to mandatory reporting obligations).</li> <li>• Reporting processes are communicated in plain language and are regularly communicated to school staff, volunteers, students and student families.</li> <li>• Guidance on reporting concerns can be easily accessed at a central location (such as the school website and the school office).</li> <li>• Processes for reporting concerns about unsafe and harmful behaviour include guidance on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when to report concerns</li> <li>• who to report concerns to</li> <li>• what happens when concerns are reported.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The school has a list of organisations or people that can be contacted regarding concerns, questions or referrals about child sexual behaviours that do not clearly or immediately meet the criteria for mandatory reporting.</li> </ul>		
POLICY AND PRACTICE: INCLUSIVE, CHILD-CENTRED SCHOOLS	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
<p><b>Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are student charters or behavioural policies that clearly set out student rights and responsibilities, and appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.</li> <li>• The school clearly communicates to students what their rights and responsibilities are.</li> <li>• There are clear processes for students to be involved in decisions that affect them.</li> <li>• There is a whole-school commitment to taking student concerns seriously.</li> <li>• The school delivers or facilitates comprehensive whole-school education on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sex and sexuality</li> <li>• consent</li> <li>• respectful relationships</li> <li>• personal safety</li> <li>• online safety.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Online safety and acceptable online activities are clearly set out for staff, students and student families and carers in school policies and procedures.</li> <li>• There are explicit policies for student and family inclusivity and cultural safety.</li> <li>• The school has a list of appropriate community organisations who they can contact for for questions and concerns about, and referrals of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children or children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</li> </ul>		



POLICY AND PRACTICE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
<p><b>Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a communication plan for the school year that includes routinely sharing information about school policies and what the school is doing to keep children safe.</li> <li>• The school regularly provides information about what families and carers can do to prevent child sexual abuse.</li> <li>• The school regularly provides information for families and carers about how to report concerns about child safety (including concerns about unsafe, harmful or abusive behaviours).</li> <li>• Information for families and carers is tailored to suit the needs of the school community.</li> <li>• The school delivers or facilitates education for families and carers on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• child safety (including the prevention of child sexual abuse)</li> <li>• sex and sexuality</li> <li>• consent</li> <li>• respectful relationships</li> <li>• online safety.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
POLICY AND PRACTICE: REVIEWING RISK AND AUDITING SCHOOL POLICIES	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
<p><b>Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a defined policy to regularly undertake whole of school efforts to assess the risk of child sexual abuse in the school and in facilities that the school uses.</li> <li>• Risk assessments can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the physical environment of the school and any facilities it uses</li> <li>• the school's policies and procedures (including those relating to online activity)</li> <li>• the school's culture</li> <li>• the characteristics of the school community.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• School risk assessments are used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inform new school policies</li> <li>• assess the adequacy of existing policies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated.</li> <li>• There are concrete plans to implement policies and refer to them in daily practice.</li> </ul>		



## School staff capabilities

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUPPORT	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
<p><b>Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school principal champions a child-centred culture in which children are listened to and child safety and wellbeing is embedded in school governance, policy and practice.</li> <li>• The school principal actively ensures the school is compliant with state or territory guidelines and with the <a href="#">National Principles of Child Safe Organisations</a>.</li> <li>• The school principal ensures the school has clear and accessible policies and procedures for keeping children safe (and that these include actions to prevent child sexual abuse).</li> <li>• The school principal ensures that policies and procedures to keep children safe are regularly reviewed and updated.</li> <li>• The school principal regularly participates in or leads whole school self-assessments of risks to child safety (including child sexual abuse).</li> <li>• The school principal seeks and shares information with other schools about their policies for preventing child sexual abuse.</li> <li>• The school principal facilitates regular, transparent plain language communication about:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school policies and procedures for keeping children safe</li> <li>• staff and volunteer codes of conduct and expected behaviour</li> <li>• roles and responsibilities for safeguarding and keeping children safe (including the prevention of child sexual abuse)</li> <li>• the need to take disclosures seriously</li> <li>• understanding that children are not to blame for their abuse or exploitation, including for peer-to-peer abuse.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

## SCHOOL TEACHERS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUPPORT

## WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO

## FUTURE ACTIONS

### Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse

- Staff and volunteers are part of a child-centred culture in which children are listened to and child safety and wellbeing is at the centre of school life.
- Staff and volunteers understand the need to take student concerns seriously and to act on them.
- Staff and volunteers understand that children are not to blame for their abuse or exploitation, including peer-to-peer abuse.
- Staff and volunteers are aware of codes of conduct and expected behaviours.
- Staff and volunteers are aware of school policies and procedures for keeping children safe.
- Staff and volunteers are aware of their roles and responsibilities for keeping children safe.
- Staff and volunteers know how to report concerns about student safety (including concerns about adult or student behaviour that does not clearly meet the threshold for mandatory reporting).
- Staff and volunteers are part of whole of school efforts to assess and address risks to child safety (including risks of child sexual abuse).
- Staff and volunteers are supported with training or professional development about:
  - how to keep children safe (including how they can protect against child sexual abuse)
  - the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and students with disability
  - online safety.
- Staff and volunteers are supported with training or professional development that will help them to deliver or support education on:
  - personal safety
  - sex and sexuality
  - consent
  - respectful relationships
  - online safety.
- Staff are aware of appropriate resources such as the [eSafety Toolkit for Schools](#) and the [Practical Tools for Implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).

## School culture

STUDENT-CENTRED SCHOOLS	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
<p><b>Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principles of child wellbeing and safety are at the centre of school life.</li> <li>• School staff promote and model attitudes and behaviours that protect against violence and abuse.</li> <li>• There is a demonstrated commitment to taking student concerns seriously.</li> <li>• Students are aware of their rights and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Students are included in discussions about policies and processes that are designed to keep them safe.</li> <li>• Students are part of participatory decision-making processes about issues that concern them.</li> <li>• Students know what to do if they see or experience unsafe or harmful behaviours.</li> <li>• Students can see how their concerns are taken seriously and acted on.</li> <li>• Students are supported to seek help when they need it.</li> </ul>		
STUDENT-CENTRED CLASSROOMS	WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO	FUTURE ACTIONS
<p><b>Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students have been helped to identify five or more trustworthy adults in their life. These are adults that children feel comfortable speaking to and confiding in. The list of adults should include people outside the child's home and might include other staff, family or community members.</li> <li>• Students receive comprehensive education on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• sex and sexuality</li> <li>• consent</li> <li>• respectful relationships</li> <li>• personal safety</li> <li>• online safety and acceptable online use</li> <li>• safety and disclosure.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Students are taught and understand that child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and grooming are illegal.</li> <li>• Students are taught and understand that children are not to blame for being abused or exploited.</li> <li>• Students are engaged in regular conversations about consent, power and pressure.</li> <li>• The classroom promotes and models attitudes and behaviours that are protective against violence and abuse.</li> </ul>		

## THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

### Considerations and strategies for preventing child sexual abuse

- The school is inclusive and culturally safe.
- Families and carers from all backgrounds:
  - feel comfortable receiving information from the school
  - feel part of the school community
  - engage with the school when they have concerns about behaviour or incidents at the school.

## WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO

## FUTURE ACTIONS