

What school principals can do to help prevent child sexual abuse

School principals have a crucial leadership role in building a whole-school approach to the prevention of child sexual abuse. They can champion a child-centred culture in which children are listened to and child safety and wellbeing are embedded in school governance, policy and practice.

There are a range of strategies and actions that school principals can take to build a child-safe school environment that can help protect against child sexual abuse.

School principals can:

Help build school capability to protect against child sexual abuse

- Ensure the school is compliant with state or territory guidelines and with the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).
- Ensure the school has clear and accessible policies and procedures (including risk-management strategies) to prevent child sexual abuse.
- Ensure that policies and procedures to keep children safe (including the prevention of child sexual abuse) are regularly reviewed and updated.
- Regularly participate in or lead whole-school self-assessments of the risk of child sexual abuse.
- Regularly participate in or lead whole-school assessments of the degree to which current policies and procedures address the risk of child sexual abuse.
- Seek and share information with other schools about their policies for preventing child sexual abuse.

Help build staff and volunteer capability to protect against child sexual abuse

- Ensure staff and volunteers understand their obligations and expected behaviours under the relevant legislation and the school's code of conduct.
- Ensure that there is an adequate induction for new staff. Screening new employees and requiring all adults to have Working with Children checks is an important part of protecting against child sexual abuse but it is not enough. New staff and volunteers should have a comprehensive induction that includes clear communication about codes of conduct and their responsibilities to protect against child sexual abuse.
- Spread awareness of appropriate resources for educators such as the [eSafety Toolkit for Schools](#) and the [Practical Tools for Implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).
- Ensure that the school provides clear and accessible avenues for reporting unsafe or harmful behaviours and that appropriate records are kept.
- Make it clear to school staff and volunteers that they should speak up if they become aware that students are feeling unsafe at school or in other places. Make them aware of mandatory reporting obligations.



- Ensure staff and volunteers take children’s concerns and any disclosures seriously. This can include keeping students informed about how their concerns are being addressed.
- Seek opportunities for all staff to engage in education and training that includes content on the prevention of child sexual abuse, how to identify child sexual abuse (including grooming), understanding child sexual behaviour, and how to respond to concerns about or disclosures of child sexual abuse.
- Ensure the school keeps accurate records of which staff and volunteers have completed training and when that training was completed.
- Seek opportunities for school staff to have training in, and understand, the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and students with diverse abilities, and how they can appropriately respond to child sexual abuse or harmful sexual behaviours.
- Promote and encourage [safeguarding](#): actions that promote child welfare and protect children from harm. Safeguarding can be encouraged by making it part of the school’s expectations of staff, including it in the school staff code of conduct and having it as regular scheduled topic at staff meetings and in staff performance and development plans.

Help build a child-centred school culture

- Incorporate the principles of rights for children and young people into all aspects of the school culture.
- Build and cultivate participatory processes so that students have a voice and are supported in seeking help or speaking out about their concerns.
- Work with school staff and volunteers to communicate prevention efforts to the whole school community.
- Share knowledge about prevention with the whole school community, including students’ families, so that appropriate role modelling can continue in home environments.

