



Child Safe Environment Policy

Policy Statement

Cobram and District Specialist School aims to provide an environment that minimises the risk of children being harmed in any way whilst in the care of Cobram and District Specialist School, and to protect educators from the possibility that allegations of child maltreatment could be falsely made against them, as a result of their work at the centre. Child abuse thrives in secrecy, therefore to prevent child abuse; the centre will develop and maintain an open and aware culture where educators and children are aware of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Cobram and District Specialist School believes it has a responsibility to all children attending the school to defend their right to care and protection. To support this right Cobram and District Specialist School will follow any procedures recommended by the Department of Education and Training and child protection authorities, when dealing with any allegations of abuse or neglect of children, and will ensure that all educators undergo appropriate professional development in this area. Cobram and District Specialist School will also document any evidence of neglect or abuse which may have occurred outside of Cobram and District Specialist School and follow procedures to ensure the child is protected from harm.

Cobram and District Specialist School believes it also has a responsibility to its educators to protect their right to confidentiality unless allegations of abuse against them are substantiated.

Rationale

Cobram and District Specialist School understands it has a duty of care to act immediately to protect and preserve the safety and wellbeing of the children in its care. All educators will be fully informed about their responsibilities to implement and adhere to Cobram and District Specialist School's child protection policies and procedures.

Child abuse includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Educators need to learn about the nature of child abuse, and develop an awareness of how and why some children are victimised.

Cobram and District Specialist School believes that the best way to ensure children's protection at Cobram and District Specialist School is to establish an environment that minimises risks and sets out clear safeguards for educators to follow. It is for this reason and the commitment to being a part of a community that takes responsibility for children's safety that Cobram and District Specialist School has developed this policy.

Strategies

COBRAM AND DISTRICT SPECIALIST SCHOOL

Cobram and District Specialist School will ensure clear observation of child occupied areas through the following means:

- Regularly reviewing educator supervision within the Cobram and District Specialist School environment to ensure all the child occupied areas can be viewed by at least one educator at all times
- Regularly reviewing the supervision plans on display outdoors
- Ensuring furniture and equipment is positioned in a way that all areas are visible

COBRAM AND DISTRICT SPECIALIST SCHOOL SECURITY

- The front door to Cobram and District Specialist School will remain closed at all times.
- The back gate to Cobram and District Specialist School will remain locked at all times during school hours. Staff may access this using an allocated key

Validity of visitors

All visitors will be required to sign in and out of Cobram and District Specialist School e.g. person on a tour, friend/family of educators. All persons will be accompanied by Cobram and District Specialist School administration /educator at all times when in the school.

Appointments will only be made with persons who have a valid reason for being at Cobram and District Specialist School.

In the case of an unauthorised person arrives at Cobram and District Specialist School to collect a child from care, the school administration will:

- contact the child's parent/guardian to ensure the person can collect the child on their behalf
- ask the person to provide photo identification e.g. licence.

If the parent/guardian cannot be contacted and/or the person is unable to provide appropriate identification, Cobram and District School administration will refuse access by the person to collect the child and the parent will be informed.

Cobram and District Specialist School administration and all educators must be aware of the persons authorised as per enrolment information who are authorised to collect the children from care. If they are unsure or unfamiliar with a person they must approach them and bring them to the office to obtain assistance.

Local council maintenance personnel/subcontractors/private contractors will be required to sign in and out prior to commencing work and report to Cobram and District Specialist School administration regarding the purpose of their visit e.g. local council electrician to check air con units etc. They are required to wear identification.

Contractors and sub contractors will be advised of the schools childsafe environment policy during induction and where applicable will be asked to comply with a current working with children check card.

All other persons who perform duties during Cobram and District Specialist School's hours of operation (paid or unpaid) will be required to present a current working with children check card, criminal record check and/or employment photo identification before being allowed on the premises i.e. student assessor, volunteers, agency staff.

Recruitment of educators

Cobram and District Specialist School will ensure all educators provide a current working with children check endorsed by the Department.. Cobram and District Specialist School administration will verify the validity of the educator's card online and will record this in their individual file.

Educators found to have an adverse criminal record check will be given the opportunity to discuss details with the Department to confirm the criminal conviction details are accurate and the circumstances of the conviction. If an offense appears on the criminal record check, approval for employment must be obtained from the relevant authority. All information obtained will be treated in strict confidence and only used to determine suitability for employment by Cobram and District Specialist School.

Prior to any appointment or offer of employment, the applicant's referees will be contacted to determine:

- details of previous employment
- applicants reliability and consistency in implementing duty of care practices
- the applicants supervisory skills

All educators will be oriented to Cobram and District Specialist School's policies and procedures and code of conduct. Whenever possible new educators will have a period of time to work alongside current educators to familiarise themselves with the children, families, other educators, routines and Cobram and District Specialist School's procedures prior to taking up their new role in a full capacity.

All educators are provided with clear position descriptions that describe their daily tasks and responsibilities of their position and identifies lines of reporting and who they are responsible to.

Supervision of children

The Cobram and District Specialist School roster is planned to ensure appropriate supervision of children is maintained and educators are replaced to ensure appropriate educator: child ratios are maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Training Regulations.

All children will be supervised at a level appropriate to the age and needs of the children, the educational program and time of day. Educators will be aware when higher levels of supervision will be needed e.g. when older children and younger children are family grouping. Supervision of children away from the main play areas i.e. bathrooms, toilets, nappy change areas, cubbies, tunnels, quiet areas, rest time is carefully monitored.

Educator training

Cobram and District Specialist School requires all educators to participate in training on child protection organised by relevant child protection authorities or support agencies.

COBRAM AND DISTRICT SPECIALIST SCHOOL will:

- ensure that educators are knowledgeable about current legislation and reporting requirements related to child protection and maltreatment and that a system for reporting and recording suspicious incidents is in place
- access current information about the procedures to be taken in relation to allegations of child abuse or neglect
- ensure a guide book to recognising signs of abuse or neglect will be made available to all educators to remind educators of the possible signs of child abuse, and the procedures they should follow if a child in their care displays behaviour or physical signs that could indicate abuse has taken place (educators' guide book)
- access current information about the procedures to be taken in relation to child abuse and neglect and will be included in the educators' guide book, and
- regularly remind educators about Cobram and District Specialist School's policies, procedures and confidentiality requirements in regard to child protection.

Children's education and empowerment

Educators will:

- foster children's self esteem and positive self image through their interactions and relationships with children
- follow Cobram and District Specialist School's Student Engagement Policy to positively guide children's appropriate behaviour
- role model appropriate behaviour and language
- build relationships with all children based on trust and will empower children to discuss what is 'safe' and who may be a 'safe' person to talk to
- encourage children to communicate their needs and concerns

Information for families

Cobram and District Specialist School will make available information on establishing a protective environment. This information will be available on the School Facebook Page and from school Administration.

Educators will be available to discuss any issues with parents/guardians

Practices and Procedures

General principles to be applied in the event that protective concerns arise

Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection may report their concerns to the Victorian Department of Human Services (Child Protection). This will usually be done through the Principal and/or Leading Teacher however, this also could be any person, including non mandated licensed children's services are able to make a report to Child Protection when they believe that a child or young person is at risk of harm and in need of protection, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

Reporting concerns

1. In the course of work hours, if the educator forms the view that protective concerns exist; the educator must discuss these concerns as soon as possible with the Principal, or if the Principal is unavailable with the Leading Teacher.
2. Following discussions with the Principal, a decision will be reached about whether a report will be made.
3. The educators involved will be informed of the outcomes, but no other educators will be given identifying information about the family unless the Principal feels that they need to know.
4. The Principal will generally make all reports unless she is unavailable to do so, and in this case the Leading Teacher will do this. The educator with the protective concerns may be present while the Principal makes a report as this may be helpful and adds validity to the report. Note that an educator or any other person may independently make a report, regardless of whether the Principal or his/her delegate decides to do so.
5. The Principal has discretion whether and if so when to notify the family involved that she is making a report. When the suspected abuse involves severe physical injury or sexual abuse, the family will generally not be notified before a report is made (examples are unexplained burns, disclosures by the child of sexual abuse). Cobram and District Specialist School will in these cases be guided by Child Protection as to if and when to notify the family.
6. Cobram and District Specialist School and each educator has a right to take any action to ensure that children at Cobram and District Specialist School and educators are safe at all times. This may involve contacting the police if any person or family makes threats against educators.
7. As part of the standard procedure, educators, the Principal or Leading Teacher, will make careful documentation of concerns and any action taken.

Links to other policies

Information Privacy Policy
Behaviour Administration Policy
Supervision of Children Policy
Student Engagement Policy
Interactions with Children Policy
Enrolment and Orientation Policy

Legislation

Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) (Vic)
Ministerial Order No. 870 Clause 6 Principle of inclusion (all standards)
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Vic)
Education and Care Services National Regulations