

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

JULY 2022

MELBOURNE SWEDISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL ASS INC.



This version of the Child Safety Policy is an update that applies the New Child Safe Standards which are in effect from 1 July 2022.

Minimum Standards

Ministerial Order 1359 provides the framework for child safety in schools and school boarding premises. It replaces Ministerial Order 870.

Schools must update their child safety strategies, policies and practices by 1 July 2022 to comply with the new Standards.

Introduction

A Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy supports schools and school boarding premises to create and maintain a child-safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe. The policy provides a framework for how schools approach child safety.

All school community members are responsible for caring for children and young people, positively promoting their well-being and protecting them from any harm or abuse.

Your Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy tells your community about your strategies and arrangements to keep children safe.

School policy must be publicly available. This will help you create a shared commitment to keeping children safe. It will also support everyone in your school community to know their responsibilities.

Understanding the Standards

The 11 Child Safe Standards are listed below. Organisations that must comply with the Standards must implement all aspects of the 11 Standards.

Each of the Standards is expressed as a statement of an expected outcome that organisations must achieve. The new Standards also include minimum requirements to clarify what you need to do for your organisation.

There are 11 Child Safe Standards:

[Standard 1: Culturally safe environments](#) – Establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

[Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing](#) – Ensure that child safety and well-being are embedded in school leadership, governance and culture.

[Standard 3: Child and student empowerment](#) – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

[Standard 4: Family engagement](#) – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and well-being.

[Standard 5: Diversity and equity](#) – Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.

[Standard 6: Suitable Staff and volunteers](#) – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and well-being values in practice.

[Standard 7: Child-focused complaints processes](#) – Ensure that processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.

[Standard 8: Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness](#) – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

[Standard 9: Physical and online environments](#) – Physical and online environments promote safety and well-being while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

[Standard 10: Review of child safety practices](#) - Implementing the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

[Standard 11: Implementation of child safety practices](#) – Policies and procedures document how schools are safe for children, young people and students.

Policy Statement & Commitments

At Melbourne Swedish Community School, we hold the care, safety and well-being of children and young people as the School's primary and fundamental responsibility.

Melbourne Swedish Community School have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard, and they are safe and feel safe.

The health, welfare and safety of all children in care are paramount. Melbourne Swedish Community School will act on behalf of children to protect their rights to safety and security following legal and regulatory requirements. In cases of suspected child abuse and other welfare concerns, staff will report to the appropriate authorities. All staff working with children take on a duty of care to ensure that all children are protected and safe from harm.

Melbourne Swedish Community School nominates one child safety officer for each campus. The officer must be up to date with child safety requirements and able to promote and effectively communicate with a range of stakeholders.

Melbourne Swedish Community School have specific policies, procedures and training that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Duty of Care

Organisations in positions of care, supervision or authority over children have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to keep them safe from harm. Schools must ensure processes are in place to avoid acts or omissions that place children in circumstances that may lead to injury or harm.¹

Melbourne Swedish Community School is committed to:

Taking every reasonable precaution to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.

Acknowledging children have the right to feel safe, with care, safety and personal privacy, and the right to counselling in case of abuse or neglect.

Equity and Diversity

Melbourne Swedish Community School recognises the diverse circumstances of children and young people and works to celebrate their strengths and individual characteristics

¹ Commission for Children and Young People, [A guide for Creating Child Safe Organisations](#), 2018

and embrace them regardless of their abilities, gender, socio-economic status and cultural background.

Staff and volunteers are trained to recognise and respond effectively to children and young people with diverse needs, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and LGBTIQ+.

Forms of Abuse

Volunteers and employees must understand how child abuse can occur to create a child-safe environment. For the Child Safe Standards, Abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:

- physical violence
- sexual offences, including sexual abuse, grooming and sexual exploitation
- serious emotional or psychological abuse
- serious neglect
- exposure to family violence

This list is not exhaustive but may include:

Cumulative harm – Cumulative harm refers to the effects of multiple adverse or harmful circumstances and events in a child's life. Cumulative harm may be caused by an accumulation of a recurring negative circumstance (such as unrelenting low-level care) or even; or by multiple occasions or events (such as persistent verbal abuse and denigration, inconsistent or harsh disciplines or exposure to family violence).

Emotional abuse – occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person to the extent where the child's behaviour is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Exposure to Family Violence – Family violence is behaviour by a person towards a family member that is:

- Physically or sexually abusive.
- Emotionally (psychologically) abusive;
- Coercive or any way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to fear for their safety or well-being or that of another family member; and
- Behaviour by a person causes a child to hear, witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of conduct referred to above.

Exposure to family violence includes children seeing, hearing or experiencing the violence in several ways.

Grooming – Many perpetrators of sexual offences against children purposely create relationships with children and young people, their families and carers to create a situation where abuse could occur. Grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity. For example:

- Spending special time with a child, e.g. in private settings, away from the organisation, online;
- Isolating the children or young people from family and peers;
- Giving gifts to a child;
- Showing favouritism;
- Allowing the child to step out of boundaries or rules;
- Touching the child; and
- Testing and breaking professional boundaries

Multidimensional harm – occurs when more than one abuse type is experienced at the same time, e.g. sexual abuse also involves physical Abuse and Emotional Abuse at the same time.

Neglect – Neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety, and development are, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Severe neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure a child's safety when exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations.

Physical violence – Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be imposed in many ways, including hitting, beating, shaking, burning, or using weapons (such as belts and paddles).

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to their age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activities, including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution and grooming².

It is important to note that sexual abuse includes both contact and non-contact behaviours.

Sexually harmful behaviour in children – refers to harmful behaviour perpetrated by a child (17 years of age or younger) to another child. Harmful behaviours in children often indicate that they have experienced abuse or neglect. Where sexually harmful

² A new grooming offence commenced in Victoria on 9 April 2014. Further information is available on the [Department of Justice website](#)

behaviour occurs, organisations have a duty of care to both children. In children under ten years of age, such behaviour is usually referred to as *sexually problematic behaviour*.

Responsibilities

KEY ROLE	KEY RESPONSIBILITIES
<p>All Employees, Students, Volunteers and Contractors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To be aware of, understand and apply the requirements of this policy in all areas of work. ● Support Melbourne Swedish Community School and CLV to embed and uphold the Child Safe Policy. ● Attend Child Safe training. ● Report any abuse/neglect concerns, allegations or disclosures to your child safe officer/principal and relevant authorities. ● Understand the legislation and legal obligations to report. ● Obtain and maintain a valid Working with Children Check as required for their role. ● Where a child is in immediate danger, call 000. ● Respond appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.
<p>Child Safety Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Act as the first point of contact for child safety concerns or allegations of abuse within the school. ● Consult and liaise with the principal and CLV on the implementation of the Child Safe Standards. ● Provide support to the child, the parents/caregivers, the person who reports and the accused person. ● Initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the child(ren). ● Decide, considering legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter will be reported to the Police or Child Protection and lodge a report as soon as possible (if required). ● Confirm relevant authorities have been notified i.e. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection, Police, DET, CCYP. ● Monitor compliance with the child safe policy and reporting procedure and respond appropriately where non-compliance is identified. ● Create, develop and support a culture of child safety within [Melbourne Swedish Community School]. ● Ensure all employees, students, volunteers and contractors are aware of how to respond appropriately to a child who

	<p>makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review and update the Child Safety Policy annually. ● Inform the children and young people about this policy and make it publicly available. ● Oversee the implementation of the Child Safe Policy and Reporting Procedure. ● Store the Incident Reporting Form for reporting purposes according to Melbourne Swedish Community School privacy policy and procedures.
Principal and other Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate leadership in child safe practices. ● Monitor compliance with the child safe policy and reporting procedure and respond appropriately where non-compliance is identified. ● Ensure organisational systems and processes are in place relating to recruitment, training, appraisals and ongoing management of staff and the implementation of the Child Safe Standards. ● Undertake or nominate an appropriate delegate where the Child Safety Officer is unavailable. Where this occurs, it must be widely publicised to the school community. ● Develop a culture of child safety within the school. ● Confirm the nature of the complaint and commence disciplinary processes if needed. ● Ensure child safe principles are included in risk assessments. ● Conduct appropriate child safe recruitment practices and screening processes. ● Ensure processes are in place to facilitate the appropriate response to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.
CLV Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continuously develop a culture of child safety within CLV. ● Provide information relating to Child Safety via training to new and existing staff and volunteers. ● Make child safety resources/templates available to child safe officers and principals. ● Provide support and assistance to child safe officers and principals. ● Inform Child Safety Officers of any changes to legislation ● Research and share information and updates regarding Child Safe Standards and legislative changes to all employees, volunteers, and contractors. ● Develop and distribute child safe materials such as posters and leaflets. ● Work with schools to determine if an allegation is a

	Reportable Conduct offence and oversee any investigations into suspected staff and volunteer misconduct and provide advice in relation to disciplinary procedures as they apply to the Child Safe Standards and Child Safe Policy.
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Code of Conduct

Melbourne Swedish Community School recognises a Code of Conduct as an essential strategy to help keep children safe from harm. A Code of Conduct lists acceptable behaviours and those that are unacceptable. It identifies professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct is one of the requirements of the Child Safe Standards. ***It applies to all school employees, contractors, volunteers and other members of the school community involved in child-related work with students.*** This Child Safety Code of Conduct identifies inappropriate behaviour with children in a school environment. The objective is to guide school staff in identifying and regulating their behaviour and the behaviour of other school staff and to protect children from abuse in the school environment.

Melbourne Swedish Community School develops the Code of Conduct to provide all staff, volunteers and committee members with clear principles about how they should behave with children. During the development and review process, Melbourne Swedish Community School endeavours to include staff, volunteers, committee members, families, and children.

CLV has a template Code of Conduct that your School can adapt and modify, which can be found here: <http://www.communitylanguages.org.au/Child-Safe.php>

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our School is committed to ensuring concerns, allegations and disclosures are reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Victoria Police. We prioritise the safety and well-being of children above all else and recognise we all have a responsibility to keep children safe. Melbourne Swedish Community School considers all staff, volunteers and committee members to be obliged to report at all times, i.e. any child safety concerns must be declared along internal and external reporting lines.

Call the police on 000 if you are concerned about a child's safety.

Melbourne Swedish Community School takes all allegations and concerns seriously and has practices to investigate thoroughly and quickly. We ensure all children, families, staff, and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they are concerned about a 'child's safety or well-being or if they observe inappropriate behaviour.

Child safety concerns may arise in a range of ways, including:

- Disclosure: a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may be referring to themselves)
- Observation: a child's behaviour or development leads a person to form a belief that the child has been abused
- Information received from others: Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse or revealed that a child is being abused

Employees and volunteers must remain open and aware of the various ways concerns may arise. Child abuse may occur in the context of Melbourne Swedish Community School activity or outside Melbourne Swedish Community School, e.g. at home or in another organisation. Melbourne Swedish Community School expects staff and volunteers to be alert to abuse in all contexts and report concerns following this policy.

All staff, volunteers and committee members must be aware of the *Failure to Disclose Offence* which creates an obligation for all adults to report a reasonable belief that a child has been sexually abused to the police. More information on reporting legislation can be found in Appendix 3.

Internal and external reporting processes must always be adhered to. Melbourne Swedish Community School recognises that internal processes must never interfere with external obligations and will support staff and volunteers in fulfilling those obligations.

The Melbourne Swedish Community School Reporting Procedure can be found in Appendix 5.

Legislative Responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. **All** adults in Victoria who reasonably believe that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 must report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** 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:** Grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years: the Offence of grooming occurs when a person over 18 years of age communicates, by words or behaviour, online or face-to-face, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for a child, to facilitate the 'child's engagement in or involvement in a sexual offence with that person or another person over the age of 18.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme seeks to improve organisations' response to their worker's and volunteers' allegations of child abuse and child-related misconduct. The scheme is established by the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (the Act).

The Commission for Children and Young People is responsible for administering the scheme.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme has been designed to ensure that the Commission can oversee and monitor the handling of allegations of child abuse and share information with relevant bodies (e.g. Working with Children Check Unit, relevant regulators and Victoria Police) to better prevent and protect children from misuse.

Reportable conduct includes allegations against an employee, volunteer, contractor, work experience or work placement student. It does not include claims made within a family context or those external to our schools.

There are five types of Reportable Conduct:

- **sexual offences** committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- **sexual misconduct** committed against, with or in the fact of a child
- **physical violence** against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes **significant emotional or psychological harm** to a child
- **significant neglect** of a child.³

Reportable Conduct includes allegations against an employee, volunteer, contractor, work experience or work placement student in the context of your School and their personal life.

- More detailed information can be found at [CCYP | Resources and support for the Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- Any disclosure made regarding alleged Reportable Conduct must be brought to the immediate attention of the Child Safe officer and the Principal.

Requirements of heads of organisations

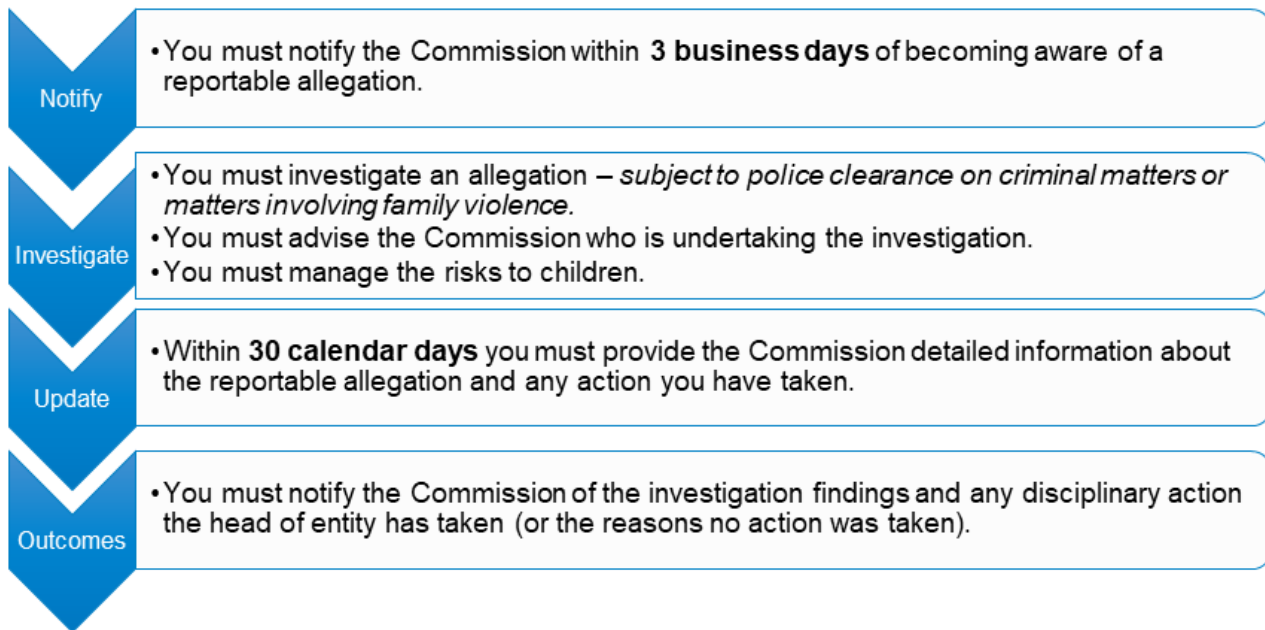
The Reportable Conduct Scheme imposes new obligations on heads of organisations (Executive Directors and principals) within the scheme. This includes requirements to:

- have in place systems to prevent child abuse and, if child abuse is alleged, to ensure allegations can be brought to the attention of appropriate persons for investigation and response
- ensure that the Commission is notified and given updates on the organisation's response to an allegation
- report allegations that may involve criminal conduct to the police.

³ The Commission for Children and Young People, [CCYP | About the Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not replace the need to report allegations of child abuse, including criminal conduct and family violence, to Victoria Police.

A snapshot of a head of Melbourne Swedish Community School obligations under reportable conduct:



Where to get help

Organisations covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme should contact the Commission for clarification and guidance and to talk through any issues of concern.

1. Telephone: 8601 5281
2. Email: childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au

Further information is also available on the Commission for Children and Young People's website at www.ccyp.vic.gov.au

[CCYP | Resources and support for the Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and well-being of children are our primary concerns. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and evidence-based.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

Suppose an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised. In that case, we provide updates to children and families and the employee/volunteer under investigation on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

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.

CLV acknowledges that community language schools must exercise appropriate processes and guidelines which respect the privacy of all staff and students. CLV considers any breach of confidentiality by schools to be a serious issue that must be investigated.

Record Keeping and Storage

Melbourne Swedish Community School will keep confidential records of any child safety concerns or complaints should they arise. Notes and observations should be clear, easy to read and accessible. Documentation should include dates, times and location, as well as details of conversations with other employees, volunteers, contractors or the child and their family/carers. Reports should be accurate and impartial.

Detailed descriptions of the incident or concern, evidence and actions taken, including incident forms, reports made to authorities and any other follow-up actions, will be completed. Following current best practice guidelines Melbourne Swedish Community School will keep these records for up to 45 years (at minimum).

All information collected by Melbourne Swedish Community School will be stored 45 years.

Recruitment and Screening

We take all reasonable steps to employ safe and skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements demonstrating our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our School understands that we have ethical and legislative obligations when recruiting staff and volunteers.

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

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, must hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this Check. The Check is just one part of creating and maintaining child-safe environments. Child-related work is not limited to work involving direct and unsupervised contact with children. Any contact with children, unless it is only occasional and incidental, is enough to trigger the requirement to get a Check.

We also conduct police record checks to ensure we are recruiting the right people.

If a person's records indicate a criminal history during the recruitment process, then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Interviewing and verbal reference checks are essential aspects of recruitment and screening. Interviews include behavioural questions focusing on child safety, and reference check templates concentrate on an applicant's appropriateness for work with children and young people.

Our School undertakes annual appraisals and exit interviews that include child safeguarding components.

Training and Support

Training and education are crucial to ensuring that all staff, volunteers and committee members in our organisation understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Staff, volunteers and committee members will be provided with comprehensive child safety training every two years to ensure child safety remains a high priority.

Our school culture aims for all staff, volunteers and committee members to feel confident and comfortable discussing child safety concerns. Training topics include:

- Our policies and Code of Conduct
- Definitions and examples of abuse, including child sexual abuse and grooming
- Indicators of abuse, including harm caused by other children and young people
- How to assess and minimise risks of abuse
- How to report Child Abuse
- Risks for children at various developmental ages and stages and supporting children to recognise abuse in age-appropriate ways
- Cumulative harm and multidimensional abuse
- Recognising and responding to diverse groups of children and young people, including LGBTQI+.
- Children's rights and perceptions of what makes an organisation child safe
- Current legislation and requirements

We also support our staff, volunteers and committee members through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; monitor and review the effectiveness of safe child practices; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

Supervision can be formal meetings or informal catch-ups and check-ins.

New employees and volunteers, and committee members will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our 'organisation'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 (as defined in our Child Safety Code of Conduct).

Managing Risks to Children

Melbourne Swedish Community School recognises that we have a responsibility to proactively identify and reduce or remove risks to children within our care. In addition to occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

Melbourne Swedish Community School has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child safety risks, which include threats posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock) and online environments (for example, social media contact).

Melbourne Swedish Community School completes annual risk assessments for each location and program.

Melbourne Swedish Community School is committed to reviewing any severe incidents or breaches of policy and procedure to ensure that learning can be utilised to strengthen our risk management processes across the organisation.

Promoting the Participation and Empowerment of Children and Young People

Melbourne Swedish Community School recognises that informed and empowered children and young people aware of safe child practices are more likely to raise concerns about abuse or misconduct. While we recognise that adults are ultimately responsible for the safety and well-being of children, we believe the children and young people we work with have an invaluable contribution to our programs and activities.

Our School has a culture that supports children and young people to understand what child safety means in age-appropriate ways. Children are informed about their rights and responsibilities and feel empowered to actively participate in building an organisational culture that is safe from harm.

Melbourne Swedish Community School wants all children and young people to feel safe and comfortable reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. Melbourne Swedish Community School is always committed to taking the opinions and concerns of children and young people seriously.