



CHOOSING A SCHOOL: THINKING ABOUT CHILD SAFETY

www.vrqa.vic.gov.au

It is important that you feel confident that your children will be safe in the care of any school you enrol them in.

Schools are responsible for keeping children safe. They have to meet legal requirements for the care, safety and wellbeing of students. From 1 August 2016, they also need to meet child safe standards to achieve a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse.

This information sheet has details for parents selecting a school for their child about what schools need to have in place to protect children from child abuse, and what information parents can ask to see.

Parents think about many things when choosing a school for their child. These may include the learning approach, location, school philosophy, school community, faith and inclusiveness for children with additional needs. More information about choosing a primary or secondary school for your child is available at www.education.vic.gov.au.

Victoria's child safe standards

In 2013, the Victorian Parliament held an Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations, resulting in the Betrayal of Trust Report.

The report found that more could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety. In response, the Victorian Government is phasing in child safe standards for organisations that work with children, including schools.

What do schools have to do?

Schools have to meet seven child safe standards. The standards require schools to have certain policies and procedures in place and to provide information to the school community.

The child safe standards apply to all school environments (eg school campuses, camps, sporting events, excursions) and online environments (eg intranets, email, social media and mobile phone technology).

Find out what schools are being required to do by visiting www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes.

What can you do?

You can ask a school to see any of the following:

- a strategy to embed a culture of child safety
- a child safety policy (this must be publicly available)
- a code of conduct outlining clear expectations for appropriate behaviour by school staff with children (this must be publicly available)
- strategies to promote child empowerment and participation, e.g. delivering appropriate education about standards of behaviour for students attending the school, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), resilience and child abuse awareness and prevention procedures for reporting suspected child abuse (this must be publicly available)
- procedures for reporting suspected child abuse (this must be publicly available).

A school that is meeting the child safe standards will have these items in place.

You can also ask other parents and children attending the school about their experiences and feelings about the school.

If you believe the school could take a stronger approach to child safety, whether for all children or to meet your child's specific needs, speak to the principal or someone in a leadership role at the school.

Safety at Your Child's School Information Sheet – 25 August 2016

Information sheets are regularly reviewed and refined based on stakeholder feedback. To provide feedback, email vrqa.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au.