

## CHILD SAFE STANDARD 6: STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND REDUCE OR REMOVE RISKS OF CHILD ABUSE

### Guidance for schools in developing their response

Child Safe Standard 6 (Standard 6) requires schools to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure child safety in school environments. This guide outlines what is required by schools to declare their compliance with Ministerial Order 870.

A child safety risk management strategy is a formal and structured approach to managing risks associated with child safety.

A risk assessment template that schools can use as a starting point can be found [here](#).

#### In preparing for compliance schools are expected to:

- **Assess, identify** and **document** the school's risks in relation to child safety, and plan and document risk management strategies where necessary. A template can be found [here](#).
- **Incorporate** risk management actions and responsibilities in the **Action Plan** as described in Standard 1.
- **Identify** the actions the school proposes to take, per Standard 1, to ensure a monitoring and review process to ensure the currency of the risk management approach.

#### BACKGROUND

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015* to introduce seven child safe standards (the Standards) into law. The Standards apply to all organisations involved in child-related work in Victoria.

[Ministerial Order No. 870](#) provides the framework for how schools will be required to comply with the Standards. Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance rests with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

The Ministerial Order specifies the following requirements for schools regarding Standard 6:

*“(1) The school governing authority must develop and implement risk management strategies regarding child safety in school environments.*

*(2) The school's risk management strategies regarding child safety must identify and mitigate the risk(s) of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.*

*(3) If the school governing authority identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more school environments the authority must make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls).*

*Explanatory note: Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk.*

*(4) As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school governing authority must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.*

*(5) At least annually, the school governing authority must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the school governing authority and school staff about:*

- a) individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;*
- b) child abuse risks in the school environment; and*
- c) the school's current child safety standards."*

## **PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING AND REDUCING OR REMOVING RISKS OF CHILD ABUSE**

While risk management assessments and strategies will vary for each school, managing risk typically involves the following steps and considerations.

1. Identify the school's child safety risks across the range of school environments (including excursions, camps, online). A sample risk assessment can be found **here**.
2. Identify any existing risk mitigation measures or internal controls.
3. Assess and rate the school's child safety risks given the existing controls in place, taking into account the likelihood of risk, and the likely consequence of the risk.
4. If the risk rating is more than the 'acceptable level', identify further risk management strategies through additional controls or other prevention, detection or mitigation strategies and then re-assess the risk.

The risk management process should be documented, recorded and reviewed periodically. Effective risk management strategies are dynamic and change over time as new risks arise and others may no longer be relevant.

Effective risk management strategies need to be transparent, well understood and diverse, to take account of the increased level of risk associated with the specific nature of some activities and the vulnerability of particular groups.

## RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- [A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST](#) [hyperlink]
- Commission for Children and Young People (2015) *A Guide For Creating A Child Safe Organisation*, Version 2.0.
- Department of Education and Training (2016) *School Policy Advisory Guide: Risk Management Policy*, and associated tools:
  - School risk register which can be edited and has automatic tools embedded is available, see: [Risk Management in Schools – Risk Register](#).
  - Subordinate risk registers for specific activities such as overseas travel/excursions or projects, see: [Risk Management in Outdoor Education – Education Outdoor tools](#).
  - Online risk management module: [Risk Management - Online Risk Module](#)
- [Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people](#)
- [Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations](#) - elearning module (log-in required)
- State of Victoria (2010) *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people: A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children's Services and Victorian Schools*.
- Victorian Government, Education & Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, January 2016, *Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools*, Ministerial Order No. 870.
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (2016) *Child Safety Standard 6: Child safety risk management strategies*