Mossfiel Primary School
Child Safety Standard 5:

Diversity and Equity

20 June 2022

Help for non-English speakers
If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the Mossfiel Primary School office in person or on 9749 1227.

Overview

This standard focuses on creating environments where all children and young people feel welcome.

Equity is a state of fairness in which all children and young people can participate freely and equally in areas of life, regardless of their background, characteristics or beliefs. This means their safety is not dependent on their socio-economic, family or personal circumstances.

As part of this standard, schools must:

- recognise and respond to students' diverse circumstances
- understand that some students are at higher risk of harm than others
- provide easy access to information
- adjust procedures to respond to different needs
- make sure complaints processes are child-friendly, culturally safe and easy to understand.

Benefits of respecting equity and diverse needs

Children and young people have unique abilities, skills and life experiences. Differences in backgrounds, personality and beliefs shape a child's experiences and needs. Their individual identity and sense of self can be fundamental to their wellbeing.

Children have better opportunities to fulfil their potential when diversity is valued. Negative experiences like exclusion and discrimination can be harmful. They increase the risk of harm and abuse to a child and decrease the likelihood of them telling someone and receiving an effective response.

Upholding equity and respecting diverse needs are relevant in implementing all the Child Safe Standards.

Actions schools must take

To comply with this standard, at minimum, schools must:

- develop and endorse a policy statement or curriculum document that details the strategies and actions it will take to uphold diversity and equity, that:
    - makes sure school staff and volunteers understand the diverse circumstances of students, provides support, and responds to vulnerable students
    - gives students, staff, volunteers and the school community access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand
    - pays particular attention to the needs of:

- students with disability
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- students who are unable to live at home
- international students
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students
- Aboriginal students and provides and promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

Actions to support diversity and equity

Recognise the diverse backgrounds, needs and circumstances of students

- Recognise the range of diverse student and family attributes. Pay attention to:
  - cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
  - the needs of students with disability and responses to disability
  - the needs of students from diverse religious and cultural communities
  - the needs of very young students and children
  - the impact of prior trauma
  - gender differences
  - the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students
  - challenges for students who are in foster care, out of home care, living away from home or international students
  - students experiencing pregnancy or who are young parents
  - socio-economic factors (experiencing family homelessness, insecure employment or accommodation, individual or family contact with the justice system, poverty, addiction, low educational attainment, remote or regional isolation).
- Pay attention to diverse student cohorts and individuals in your community, recognising that they may have higher risk of harm.
- Normalise asking for and using people's preferred pronouns and names for students.
- Use contemporary, culturally sensitive and inclusive examples when discussing families, relationships or professions and vocations.

Identify and address challenges that students experience due to their diverse attributes

- Communicate that discrimination and bullying are not tolerated – if incidents of bullying or discrimination occur, address the incident in line with school policy.
- Let students know they can raise concerns or report incidents that occurred at school and outside the school.
- Check in with vulnerable students and their families to confirm their needs are being met. This can occur at pick-up or drop-off, at parent teacher interviews or through informal discussions.
- Engage genuinely with students. Find out what matters to them, what they know and don't know about safety, and what they need to be safe and feel safe.
- Validate students' feelings. Students may feel that they have not been listened to or believed in the past.
- Offer buddying and mentoring for students who are at risk of social isolation.
- Discuss how students feel about discussing their personal circumstances and respect their wishes. Note that where staff or volunteers have formed a reasonable belief that sharing information is necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to an individual's life, health, safety or welfare, they may be required to share information despite the wishes of the student that their information remain confidential.
- Take a holistic approach when responding to family violence.

- Respond to family violence in a way that is accessible, culturally responsive, safe, child-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory.

Put in place policies and strategies to help meet the diverse needs of students

- Ensure school environments are welcoming and inclusive. For example:
    - display flags representing different cultures within the school community
    - provide materials in different languages
    - decorate the school with artistic expressions from students and young people.
- Provide child safety information in accessible, child-friendly language and formats.
- Accompany child safety information with the support materials needed to help students and families interpret it.
- Anticipate the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and life circumstances. Don't expect all students to be equally empowered to ask for what they need.
- Provide staff and volunteers with training to identify and address racism, bullying and discrimination.
- Create opportunities remind staff and volunteers about student diversity and accommodating students and young people's needs.
- Seek out expert advice as needed to support inclusion, such as an occupational therapist, speech pathologist, provision planning.

Support diversity through school planning and resources

- Recognise dates that connect with your school community, for example:
    - Cultural Diversity Week (March)
    - Hearing Awareness Week (1–7 March)
    - IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia, 17 May)
    - National Reconciliation Week (27 May–3 June)
    - Crazy Hair Day (Cystic Fibrosis Awareness, 26 July)
    - World Mental Health Day (10 October)
    - International Day of Persons with Disability (3 December)
- Compile a range of age-appropriate instructional materials for exploring differences and similarities in class including:
    - Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships resources
    - Books, and resources that reflect diverse views and perspectives
    - Speech and drama scripts that explore themes around diversity.
- Use images of students with diverse characteristics in school publications to reflect the school community.

Resources

- https://www.vic.gov.au/schools-diversity-equity-guidance
- Accessible Buildings Program
- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes
- Child protection privacy and information sharing
- Culturally diverse books in the Premiers' Reading Challenge
- Family Violence Support
- Flexible Learning Options (FLOs)
- Health care needs
- Individual education plans

- Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Contextualised Guidance and Toolkit
- Koorie Education
- LGBTIQ Student Support: Policy | education.vic.gov.au
- LOOKOUT Education Support Centres
- Mental health in schools
- Privacy and Information Sharing Policy
- Safe Schools
- Schools Mental Health Menu
- Student Resource Package – Equity Funding
- Student support groups
- Students Absconding or Going Missing from School
- Students with disability
- Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care
- Teaching and learning resources – selecting appropriate materials
- The Navigator program (education.vic.gov.au)
- Young Carers – Identification and Support
- Youth Justice – Additional Support for Young People
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Approval and review

Policy last reviewed	Dec 2024
Consultation	School Council Policy Sub Committee 14/6/2022 Staff 6/6/ 2022 Staff Consultative Committee Student Voice Team 13/07/22 Parent / Carer Community 18/07/22
Approved by	Paul Maisey – Mossfiel PS Principal School Council – 10th August 2022
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