



DANDENONG RANGES STEINER SCHOOL

Participation and Empowerment of Children

Children often do not report abuse because they:

- feel uncomfortable doing so
- do not recognise behaviours as abuse or grooming
- do not know who to raise their concerns or make a report.

Dandenong Ranges Steiner School recognises that in order to achieve a child safe environment at the School which meets students' intellectual, physical, social, emotional and moral needs, students need to be involved in the creation and maintenance of such an environment.

It is our policy that we have simple and accessible processes in place to assist children (including those from diverse cultural backgrounds and those with a disability) to develop appropriate knowledge and skills to identify and communicate when they do not feel safe.

It is our policy that relevant staff members are trained on methods of empowering children and encouraging their participation.

Pastoral Care - Child Safety

Pastoral care is the support given to students for their development as a person. It relates to the total care of students and involves tending to both the academic and non-academic needs of students including spiritual, emotional and social wellbeing.

Dandenong Ranges Steiner School is committed to providing a safe, supportive and social environment where students feel nurtured as they learn.

To this end, we have developed, and continue to develop, a comprehensive range of pastoral care policies and procedures that are designed to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of our students, and to deliver age appropriate education to all students about:

- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- child abuse awareness and a child's right to be safe
- a child's right to make decisions about their body and their privacy
- how they can raise concerns about abuse
- resilience and coping with adversity
- the fact that any concerns they do raise will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately
- our Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct

- standards of behaviour for students.

We are committed to ensuring that child abuse reporting procedures are age-appropriate, simple, and accessible for all children including children from culturally diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

Students are encouraged to provide feedback about child safety and protection issues at the School and the School conducts student focus groups and organises student surveys about various safety issues at the School, including Child Safety. The School takes all student contributions seriously and actively looks for ways to implement improvements to its Child Safety Program to reflect these contributions.

Information about these topics, as well as other child safety and wellbeing topics, is made available to all students through various age-appropriate pastoral care initiatives as well as communications such as through the School's newsletter. Child safety and wellbeing topics are also incorporated into the School's curriculum.

Students with a Disability

The School has an obligation to students with a disability to ensure that they are afforded the same level of educational and pastoral care as any other student at the School and considers how each policy and procedure the School establishes and implements may affect students with a disability.

Dandenong Ranges Steiner School is committed to ensuring that we fulfil our legal obligations including those related to discrimination and disability standards (refer to our [Disability Discrimination](#) policy).

The School recognises that students with a disability will not only require additional assistance to participate and engage in School activities in a safe and supportive manner, but also that there are specific Child Safety risks that arise in relation to students with a disability. Managing these risks may include for example, stricter screening procedures and training for staff who assist students who require help with personal activities such as toileting or dressing.

Students with a disability at the School may also require varied reporting avenues or systems to students without a disability, and the School has considered this when creating and implementing our [Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse](#). When supporting a student with a disability who has been impacted by child abuse, it is critical that the School considers:

- the chronological age, developmental age and cognitive function of the student in order to tailor developmentally appropriate support strategies
- the student's vulnerability to ongoing abuse when considering the need to make a further report and/or implement further risk mitigation strategies.

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