

AL KAMAL ARABIC SCHOOL CHILD SAFETY POLICY 2024

On November 26, 2015, the Victorian Parliament approved the enactment of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015, incorporating child safe standards into law. These standards took effect on January 1, 2016, for the majority of organizations dealing with children, aiming to instigate a cultural shift in how entities address the potential risks of child abuse and neglect.

Objective: The Child Safety Policy of Al Kamal Arabic School underscores our school's dedication to establishing and sustaining an environment that is safe and welcoming for children, ensuring their safety and sense of security.

This policy:

- Pertains to all school personnel, volunteers, and contractors, regardless of their direct contact with students. It also extends to school council members when specified.
- Should be considered in conjunction with our other child safety and well-being policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

Definitions: Child abuse: Child abuse encompasses any act committed against a child, including:

- Sexual offenses or grooming
- Infliction of physical violence
- Serious emotional or psychological harm
- Serious neglect of a child, including medical neglect.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from abuse, managing the risk of abuse, providing support to a child at risk, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment refers to any physical or virtual space authorized or provided by the school for a child's use during or outside school hours. This encompasses various settings, including:

- The school's campus
- Online school platforms (such as email and intranet systems)

- Other locations designated by the school for a child's activities (e.g., areas used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other school-related activities or events)

School staff includes individuals working in the school environment who may be:

- Employed by the Department of Education and Training
- Directly engaged or employed by a school council
- Volunteers or contracted service providers (regardless of whether they are a body corporate or another entity acting as an intermediary).

This is in alignment with the school's commitment to child safety and the promotion of a secure environment for children.

Al Kamal Arabic School is dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of every child and young person. Our primary focus lies in prioritizing their care and making decisions that uphold these principles. We are devoted to establishing secure environments where students not only feel safe but also have their participation valued, views respected, and voices heard regarding decisions impacting their lives. Our child-safe policies, strategies, and practices are designed to be inclusive, considering the diverse needs of all children and students.

Maintaining a zero-tolerance stance on child abuse, we proactively identify and manage any potential risks of harm within our school settings. We actively promote positive relationships founded on trust and respect, both between students and adults and among peers. Addressing child safety concerns with seriousness, we respond promptly and thoroughly whenever raised or identified.

Special attention is given to the child safety needs of various student groups, including Aboriginal students, those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, and individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and gender diverse, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+). In our school, inappropriate or harmful behavior targeting students based on characteristics such as racism or homophobia is not tolerated, and instances identified are addressed with appropriate consequences.

Recognizing child safety as a shared responsibility, every individual involved in our school plays a crucial role in promoting child safety and well-being. We commit to regular reviews of our child-safe practices, seeking input from students, families, staff, and volunteers to continually inform and improve our strategies.

Guided by our school philosophy and values, Al Kamal Arabic School is dedicated to creating and maintaining a child-safe school environment. Our commitment extends to preparing students to acquire the knowledge and skills essential for becoming lifelong learners, successful and content individuals who actively participate in and contribute to our community and the broader world. The values at Al Kamal Arabic School serve as the guiding principles for the decisions and behaviors of all members of our school community.

Principles of Child Safety:

In the planning, decision-making, and execution of its activities, Al Kamal Arabic School is committed to:

- Adopting a proactive, preventative, and participatory approach to safeguarding children.
- Empowering and valuing children's involvement in decisions that impact their lives.
- Cultivating an open culture that encourages the safe disclosure of potential risks to children.
- Respecting cultural diversity and child-rearing practices while prioritizing child safety.
- Providing written guidelines on appropriate conduct and behavior towards children.
- Selecting highly suitable individuals for roles involving children, and ensuring rigorous supervision and professional development for staff and volunteers.
- Ensuring children are aware of whom to approach if they feel worried or unsafe, fostering an environment where concerns are comfortably raised.
- Promptly reporting any suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment to the relevant authorities.
- Sharing information with other organizations in a lawful manner when the safety and well-being of children are at stake.

- Valuing the input of families and caregivers, maintaining regular communication with them.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Code of Conduct for Child Safety establishes clear boundaries and expectations regarding appropriate interactions between adults and students. It outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in both physical and online environments.

We ensure that students are well-informed about acceptable conduct, empowering them to navigate interactions with adults at school confidently. The Code of Conduct also provides procedures for reporting any inappropriate behavior.

Risk Management for Child Safety and Wellbeing

At our school, we systematically identify, assess, and address risks to child safety and wellbeing in both physical and online settings. Our comprehensive approach involves utilizing child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and practices.

Communication and Family Engagement

Monitoring and enhancing the safety and well-being of children is a shared responsibility involving both our school community and families. At Al Kamal Arabic School, we are dedicated to fostering family engagement by providing accessible information on our school's child-safe policies and practices. We actively involve families in shaping our approach to child safety and well-being, encouraging their input in the development and review of policies. Our commitment to transparent communication includes making relevant documents, such as the Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct, accessible on our school website, regular reminders in the school newsletter, discussions in leadership and staff meetings.

Diversity and Equity

As a child-safe organization, we celebrate the diverse backgrounds of our students, families, and community, striving to create respectful environments free from discrimination. Our focus is on the well-being and growth of all individuals. Recognizing the unique skills and experiences of each child, we pay special attention to those with additional needs, tailoring our child safety strategies and supports accordingly. This inclusive approach extends to Aboriginal children, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, those affected by family violence, international students, and those identifying as LGBTIQ+.

Suitable Staff and Volunteers

At Al Kamal Arabic School, stringent child-safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices are applied to ensure the suitability of all staff, contractors, and volunteers working with children. Staff recruitment adheres to the Department of Education and Training's policies and guidelines, covering aspects such as Working with Children clearance. Newly appointed staff undergo a comprehensive child safety and well-being induction program, focusing on policies, code of conduct, and reporting obligations. Ongoing supervision and performance assessments ensure staff engaged in child-related work maintain suitability. Any inappropriate behavior towards children is promptly addressed following school and department policies.

Volunteers are held to high standards outlined in our Volunteers Policy, ensuring their suitability, providing child safety induction and training, and outlining expectations for supervision and management.

Child Safety Knowledge, Skills, and Awareness

Continuous training and education are crucial to ensuring that staff fully comprehend their roles in maintaining child safety. Ongoing efforts are made to enhance staff understanding of child safety policies, codes of conduct, and reporting obligations through regular training and educational initiatives.

Complaints and Reporting Procedures

Al Kamal Arabic School promotes a culture that urges staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to voice concerns and complaints, making it challenging for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct, or abuse to go unnoticed.

In the event of an incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion of child abuse, all personnel, including school council employees must adhere to our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. Our policy and procedures specifically address complaints and concerns related to child abuse involving a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors, or any other person associated with the school.

Upon addressing immediate health and safety concerns and informing relevant school staff, we will ensure compliance with:

- The Four Critical Actions for complaints and concerns regarding adult behavior towards a child.
- The Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending for complaints and concerns related to student sexual offenders.

Confidentiality and Privacy

This school handles information about specific children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law and other applicable regulations. The principles governing the collection, use, and storage of information are outlined in the Department of Education and Training's Schools' Privacy Policy.

Records Management

Recognizing the significance of good records management for child safety and well-being, we manage our records in line with the Department of Education and Training's policy.

Child Safety Practices Review

We have implemented structured procedures to regularly assess and enhance our child safety policies, procedures, and practices. Our commitment involves:

- Conducting a thorough policy review every two years or following any significant child safety incidents.
- Analyzing complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to refine both policy and practice.
- Embracing transparency by sharing valuable insights and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

Additionally, we align our efforts with various related policies and documents, including but not limited to:

- Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Risk assessment register
- Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools
- Four Critical Actions for Schools
- Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools
- Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending