

Child Protection Policy

Southern Montessori Education Centre Inc.

Version	Approved By	Date	Maintained By	Next Review
5	Board of Governors	March 2021	Governance	March 2024

Policy Statement

This policy describes the commitment of Southern Montessori School to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in our Centre. It outlines the policies, procedures and responsibilities that are enacted to establish and build an environment which is child-safe and child-friendly; where children are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.

The Centre will seek to ensure that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of, has had the opportunity to read and understand the policy, and obtain further clarification on the policy and related documents.

The Centre acknowledges that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing, development and effective learning. The safety and wellbeing of our children is a paramount consideration in all that we do.

The Centre acknowledges the vulnerability of children and young people in our care and takes a proactive, preventative, and participatory approach to protecting them through:

- the on-going development of a positive, child safe culture;
- the development, implementation and monitoring of rigorous policies and procedures;
- seeking to ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities, vigilant and, if required, prepared to respond in an appropriate and timely manner.

We are committed to:

- supporting the rights of the child as set out in the UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child
- acting without hesitation to seek to ensure a child-safe and child-focused environment is maintained at all times,
- valuing and embracing the opinions and views of children,
- abiding by all legislative and regulatory obligations, and striving for our practices to be regarded as best practice and 'beyond compliance',
- empowering children with the skills and knowledge to keep themselves and others safe,
- taking whatever necessary action is required to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect.

Materials will be selected with this in mind.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Clearly demonstrate the Centre's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Inform all leaders, staff and volunteers of their obligations to act ethically towards children and their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Give guidance on the processes and procedures that aim to ensure children's safety and wellbeing across all areas of the organisation's work.

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SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, parents/carers, children and other individuals involved with the school, whether on a regular or occasional basis. It applies:

- on the school premises
- at functions, excursions, trips or camps organised by the school
- when members of the school community are representing the school.

Note, it is a condition of employment that staff comply with all terms and conditions outlined in their contract and the Staff Handbook, which includes compliance with all policies and procedures at all times.

PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

1. A clear and accessible child safety policy

The Child Protection Policy is a clear and accessible statement of intent in regard to the Centre's commitment to being a highly regarded Child Safe School through promoting children's wellbeing and safeguarding all children from harm.

The policy is underpinned by the guiding principles of the National Safe Schools Framework and addresses the requirements of the Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice (DHS 2012, updated 2019), as well as the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the National Quality Framework, Legislative and School Registration requirements and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The Centre prides itself on our proactive and vigilant approach to protecting all students to the best of our ability. Child protection is a very high priority and embedded in our daily operations. Our policies and procedures are available to our community and feedback for improvement is welcomed and regularly sought.

2. Identify and analyse risk of harm

The Centre has developed and implements a risk management strategy that identifies, reviews, assesses and takes steps to minimise and manage the risks of harm to children

Risk Management

- i. identifying risks
- ii. assessing risks
- iii. minimising the risk of harm.

Annual Review of Child Protection Policy and Procedures

The School Leadership Team conducts an annual review prior to the start of Term 1. A full review is undertaken every three years. All changes are approved by the School Board.

Documentation and Record-keeping

Accurate, up to date and confidential records are kept of the following:

- staff and volunteer training
- National Police History Check
- Working with Children Checks
- reports of harm or risk of harm and associated documentation.

3. Choose suitable employees and volunteers

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The Centre is very diligent and prudent in ensuring that all reasonable actions are taken so that only suitable, appropriate and exemplary people are selected to work or volunteer with our students. This involves a combination of Criminal History, Working with Children, Referee and Background checks, face to face interviews, probationary periods and vigilance in observing their behaviour, attitudes and relationships with students.

Working with Children Checks and National Police History Checks

All persons (staff and volunteers) who are in regular contact with children or who work in close proximity to children on a regular basis, or who supervise such persons, or who have access to children’s records are required to present to the Centre a current Working with Children Check before commencing their duties and to keep currency, carried out at least every five years.

In addition, all teachers are required to have current registration with the Teachers’ Registration Board of SA. A National Police History Check is a compulsory component of the Teacher Registration and it is the teacher’s responsibility to maintain the currency of their teacher registration (every 3 years) and provide the Business Manager with a copy of their certificate prior to the expiration date.

Background and Referee Checks

As a key part of the recruitment, as well as Working with Children Checks, referees are contacted and other necessary background checks undertaken to ensure the suitability of all persons who are in regular contact with children or who work in close proximity to children on a regular basis, or who supervise such persons, or who have access to children’s records.

Face to Face Interviews

Whenever possible a face to face interview with the Principal will be conducted prior to the appointment of any staff member.

4. Expectations, Supervision, Codes of Conduct and Professional Boundaries for Staff and Volunteers

The school values all staff and volunteers. They are treated fairly and respectfully and are required to contribute to our students’ safety and wellbeing in the following ways:

1. Provide safe, respectful and engaging environments where our students observe and are taught positive life skills and values. This helps our students to:
 - develop and expect positive relationships with others
 - feel connected to the school community and beyond
 - be resilient and resourceful in dealing with stress and adversity
 - achieve their potential as learners and member of our community.

2. Be aware, vigilant and able to recognise when children and young people’s wellbeing or safety is being compromised. They should be prepared to act and follow up on their concerns. This helps ensure:
 - timely and relevant information is gathered and shared with other relevant persons
 - unsuitable individuals are not present at or involved with the school
 - students and their families are directed to support when they first show signs of needing it
 - fewer children and young people are harmed by violence, abuse and neglect.

3. Understand that the needs of children and young people who have been harmed through violence, abuse or neglect may require them to adapt their programs and support accordingly. They are to aim to help these children and young people stay connected to school and contribute to their recovery and their development of positive coping skills and learning success.

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Supervision of Students

Students are actively supervised by staff at the appropriate ratio for the age of the students, purpose, type and location of the activity.

Working One to One with Students

At times it may be necessary for staff to work one to one alone with a student. Guidelines for these situations are outlined in the Code of Conduct for Staff as well as the Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people. Three essential rules are:

- make it public (open and visible space)
- make it authorised (ensure you have your school leader's approval)
- make it timely (consider the appropriateness of the time of day and length of time).

Codes of Conduct

Clear, accessible and transparent codes of conduct which reflect the school values and specify standards of conduct and care, face to face and online behaviour and professional boundaries have been developed in consultation with the relevant persons and are regularly reviewed. Consequences for breaching codes of conduct are clearly outlined in each document. All community members are engaged with our Codes of Conduct which are available on our website and regularly promoted and revisited:

- Code of Conduct for Staff (based on Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people)
- Code of Conduct General Guidelines for the School Community (based on Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people)

See also, Volunteers Working in Schools on a Regular Basis.

5. Support, train, supervise and enhance performance

All volunteers and employees who work with children or their records have ongoing supervision, support and training such that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.

Responding to Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RAN-EC) Training

All school staff must complete the full-day RAN training and then the regular (every three years) update training (online). A current certificate must be provided to the Business Manager prior to the commencement of duties or the expiration date.

Volunteers undertake an in-school face to face session (PowerPoint presentation and course handbook) facilitated by the Principal or their delegate at the beginning of each year or when necessary. Volunteers are also expected to complete the online Responding to Abuse and Neglect Education and Care Induction for Volunteers Module (20 minutes) and print their certificate upon completion. Volunteers must undertake the training before commencing their role.

Regular training and updates are provided to employees and volunteers in regard to: School policies, practices, Codes of Conduct, Protective Practices for staff and volunteers, legal obligations and mandatory notification.

Staff Induction

All new staff undergo an induction process. The school's child protection principles, policies and procedures, as well as their role and responsibilities, form an integral component of the induction. It is essential that new staff not only develop a thorough understanding of the legislative, administrative, social and educational requirements to protect children but that they also engage with our proactive and positive child-safe ethos, culture and practices.

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6. Report and respond appropriately to the suspicion that a child or young person may be at risk

Reporting Procedure

All staff and volunteers are regularly reminded of their obligation to and how to make timely and accurate reports of suspected harm or risk of harm. It is an expectation of the school that any person who, in the course of their work or volunteering, suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk must report their suspicion to the Child Abuse Report Line: CARL 13 14 78 or eNotifications <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/report-child-abuse-or-neglect>. This includes persons who are not mandated to report the suspicion that a child is at risk under the legislation. All serious concerns must be reported via the phone report line and not via the online reporting system.

All teachers, staff and volunteers need to also inform the Principal of any mandatory notifications, to ensure that the Principal can take any appropriate action to support the child. If the notification concerns the Principal, then the President of the School Board would be informed not the Principal.

The School Mandatory Notification Procedure details the requirements and process to make a report and these must be followed precisely.

Responding to Reports of Suspected Harm

The School will act promptly and responsibly in dealing with any reports and allegations of harm or risk of harm.

- All reports will be managed by the Principal (or the Chair of the School Board if the report concerns the Principal).
- The care, safety and welfare of the student is the paramount consideration.
- Where appropriate other external authorities will be notified e.g. SAPOL, Teachers' Registration Board, AISSA.
- The Guidelines provided in the SA cross-sector document Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings (2019) when required will be followed.
- If the report involves a staff or community member, the Principal will also follow the guidelines in the Critical Incident Procedure.

Responding to problem sexual behaviour involving children and young people

The Guidelines provided in the SA cross-sector document: Responding to problem sexual behaviour involving children and young people: guideline for staff in education and care settings (2019) are to be followed in all circumstances where a child or young person is alleged to have engaged in problem sexual behaviour. The responsibilities staff members have in these circumstances are significantly different from those involving allegations of sexual misconduct by adults. They reflect the different rights and needs of children and young people and the different legislation within which staff must operate.

Reporting and responding to complaints about a person involved in our organisation

Staff and volunteers will immediately report to the Principal any concern or complaint relating to the behaviour or conduct of another person towards or affecting a child or young person. The Centre will deal with all complaints promptly, sensitively and fairly and reinforcing that the paramount concern is always the safety and protection of children and young people.

The Positive Grievance Resolution Policy outlines the procedure that will be followed when the Centre is made aware of concerns or complaints regarding the behaviour of a person towards or affecting a child or young person.

Record Keeping and Documentation

Documentation of any incident and follow up actions, e.g. reports, records of interviews and meetings must be stored in a locked, confidential file.

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7. Empower and promote the participation of children and young people in developing and maintaining child safe environments

Curriculum

The school-wide implementation of the Keeping-Safe Child Protection Curriculum (KS:CPC) enables a cohesive, consistent and clear approach to developing four key aspects:

- the right to be safe
- relationships
- recognising and reporting abuse
- protective strategies.

The Keeping-Safe Child Protection Curriculum is embedded in our teaching, learning and pastoral care across all year levels. It is a school expectation that all teaching staff undertake the full day KS:CPC training and then maintain currency through completing the online course every three years.

Pastoral Program

Our Pastoral Program is fully integrated throughout the teaching and learning and structural organisation to effectively meet the personal, social, wellbeing and academic needs of students. A greater understanding of themselves and others is nurtured; they develop resilience and gain confidence to manage and cope with the opportunities and challenges of real life. A focus on positive psychology and wellbeing empowers students to keep themselves and others safe.

Student Voice

We believe our students have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling, and we encourage them to actively shape their own education. Student voice allows students to engage, participate, lead and learn. We foster in our students a sense of social justice and develop their self-confidence and the skills to stand up for what they believe is just and fair.

RELATED LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child
- Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 Children's Protection Law Reform (Transitional Arrangements and Related Amendments) Act 2017
- Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)
- Teacher Registration and Standards Act 2004 (SA)
- Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011

CROSS SECTOR GUIDELINES (SA)

- Child Safe Environments: principles of good practice
- Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people
- Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings
- Responding to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people (2019)
- Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting Safety and Wellbeing
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

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RELATED SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Mandatory Notification Procedure
- Positive Grievance Resolution Policy
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff Policy
- Code of conduct General Guidelines for the School Community
- Induction Policy - Staff
- Induction Policy - Relief Staff
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Critical Incident Management Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Student Grievance Policy
- ICT Policy
- Camps and Excursion Policy
- Use of Private Cars to Transport Students Policy

Document History and Version Control Table			Based on the Legal Liabilities Guidelines 2011
Version	Date Approved	Approved By	Brief Description
1	Nov 2014	Board of Governors	Creation of original document
2	Nov 2016	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board
3	Nov 2017	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board
4	May 2020	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board
5	March 2021	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board

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