

PROMOTE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF CHILDREN

Description

Westall Secondary College ensures children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. Westall Secondary College has simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety.

All staff have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child abuse.

How Westall Secondary College promotes participation and empowerment of children:

- We provide children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their right to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to injure them, and how they can raise concerns about abuse. Information is included Parent Information sessions and posters, as well as on websites and social media. Our sub school and wellbeing model includes information about their body, puberty and their rights and we inform students about violence and the ways to address violence.
- We ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children.

For Example:

- We have access to professionals to translate information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, and statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages, including relevant Aboriginal languages.
- We gather feedback from children, for example SATS survey, focus groups, circle time and social media, about whether they would feel safe and taken seriously if they were to raise concerns, and we then implement improvements based on this feedback.
- We enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe policies, reporting and response procedures, and acknowledge and act upon these where possible.
- We ensure services are accessible for people with a disability, for example provide appropriate communication aids such as hearing loops, provide access to DET psych/Speech specialists, outsource specific cases to agencies – OnPsych, Family Life, Oz Child, Emerge Support, Bayciss, DHS etc.
- We ensure Aboriginal children are accepted when identifying as Aboriginal, and that staff and volunteers would understand appropriate responses to children identifying as Aboriginal.
- We encourage participation and empowerment of children in other organisational activities, such as organisational planning and decision making. For example – Student Leadership positions, Assembly presentations, Student Leadership Conferences, School Council and student forums.
- We raise awareness in the community about children's rights, through staff conversations with families and communications such as websites, newsletters, Information Evenings, Parent Teacher meetings, School Council, etc.

By successfully implementing these strategies Westall Secondary College ensures:

- reporting procedures for when a child feels unsafe are accessible for all children
- children understand what child abuse is (age appropriate), and their rights
- children understand how to report an allegation of abuse or concern for their safety to the organisation, a trusted adult and external bodies (for example, the police)
- children feel safe, empowered and taken seriously if they raise concerns
- children feel empowered to contribute to the organisation's understanding and treatment of child safety
- children's reports of concern are responded to appropriately
- staff understand how to empower children and encourage their participation.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle, or as required due to changes in relevant Acts, Laws or should situations arise that require earlier consideration.

This policy was ratified by School Council in September 2016.