

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Northern Australia) Limited



Department: Education	Description: Policy
Administrative Area: Risk Management and Compliance	Type: Mandatory
Document Name: A National Framework for Creating Safe Communities for Children	Issue Date: 4 August 2016
Document ID: NAS169.001.ADM	Review Date: 4 August 2017

A National Framework for Creating Safe Communities for Children

Purpose:	The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to outline the standards of behaviour expected of all child related workers of the Company	
Scope:	Students and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements	
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld) • Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 (Qld) • Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld) • Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001 (Qld) • Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2001 (Qld) • Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) • Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 (Qld) • NAS170.001.ADM – Child Protection Policy • NAS105.005.ADM – Child Protection Procedures • NAS188.001.ADM – Staff Code of Conduct • NAS114.003.ADM – Child Protection Risk Management Strategy (for the <i>Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)</i>) 	
Status:	Draft	Supersedes:
Policy Owner:	Seventh-day Adventist School (Northern Australia) Limited	
Authorised by:	Education Director	Date of Authorisation: 4 October 2017
Approved by:	<p>This policy has been ratified by the Board of Directors of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Northern Australia) Limited as A National Framework for Creating Safe Communities for Children for Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Northern Australia) Limited.</p> <p>Pastor Darren Slade Board of Directors Chairperson: Date of Approval: 4/10/2017</p> <p>Mrs Natalie Scott Board of Directors Secretary: Date of Approval: 4/10/2017</p>	
Review Cycle:	Reviewed Annually (every year)	Next Review Date: 4 October 2018
Review Team:	Board of Directors, NSSAB, AdSAFE, Chief Education Officer, Project Officers	

Revised by:	Section	Details of Changes
Murray Chapman (4 August 2016)	Whole document	Adopted ASA document A National Framework for Creating Safe Communities for Children – assigned to document ID NAS169.001.ADM
Steve Cowley (5 October 2017)	Whole document	It was identified that NAS169.001.ADM was already assigned to Staff Code of Conduct. Therefore NAS188.001.ADM – Staff Code of Conduct was created. This policy was separated out from the Child Protection Policy Suite so that it can be reviewed annually.

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A National Framework for Creating Safe Communities for Children

Adventist Schools Australia

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1. INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church unequivocally commits Adventist education workplaces and every school community to foster the dignity, worth and integrity of every person to whom it provides a service and to every person who works in conference schools' companies.

Adventist education uphold its mission by modelling positive relationships and acting in a manner that creates safe and productive educational and pastoral environments as articulated in the Community of Faith and Learning model. The core commitment of Adventist education is to create school communities where every person and in particular every child *'belongs'*. Belonging is enhanced through healthy relationships, feeling safe and included, and where personal identity is respected and nurtured. Belonging provides the foundation for *'believing'* in an individuals' value as a child of God and supports their ability to *'become'* well-balanced, informed and responsible citizens who are active in worship and service for God.

Accordingly, the Adventist identity of our schools continues to be supported via the development and implementation of a national framework for creating safe environments which:

- Is inspired by Adventist education's ultimate purpose of restoring human beings to the image of their Maker through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and the balanced development of the whole person;
- Is concerned to ensure the dignity and integral growth of every person;
- Acknowledges the responsibility entrusted to all members of Adventist Schools Australia its schools companies and schools; and
- Seeks to promote healing, reconciliation, justice and liberation.

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference schools' companies and schools are committed to creating safe learning communities for both children and adults.

A national framework has been developed to inform and guide these communities in fulfilling their duty of care to students - and to promote best practice in creating and maintaining safe communities for both children and adults to belong, believe and become.

Consequently, each of the key elements of ASA's national framework for creating safe communities are intended to build the capacity of each school within the Australian Adventist school system as a safe learning community.

3. KEY ELEMENTS

The key elements of ASA's national framework for creating safe communities are as follows:

1. Systems to ensure adaptation, innovation and continuous improvement;
2. Governance and culture, including child protection policies and procedures;
3. Participation and empowerment of children;
4. Human resource management;
5. Education and training.

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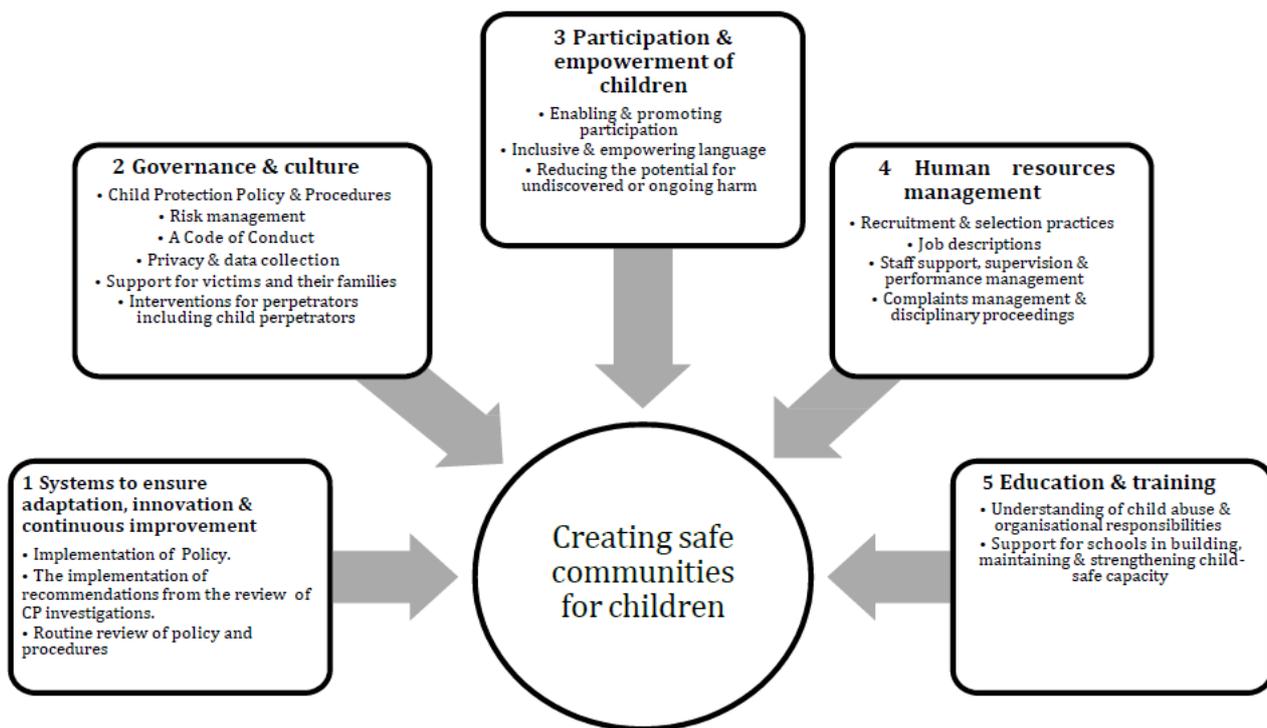


Figure 1: Elements of Adventist Schools Australia's National Framework for Creating Safe Communities

3.1 Systems to ensure adaptation, innovation and continuous improvement

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools understand the need to remain vigilant and responsive to new challenges in order to maintain a safe environment for children and young people. This commitment to the safety of children and young people is expressed in an ongoing cycle of assessment, action and reflection. ASA, conference school companies and schools are committed to regularly reviewing, updating and refining child protection policies and procedures to assess their effectiveness, and strive for excellence. These processes require openness to external influence and accountability, and commitment to quality assurance and improvement practices. Recommendations from the routine review of incidents, complaints and investigations could inform better practice and should be used in any review of policy and practice. The effective implementation of new policy and procedures requires the expenditure of some time and effort. Careful planning is required to ensure all individuals within the organization understand their roles and responsibilities within a newly implemented child protection policy framework.

Previously a systematic national approach was taken to child protection-related matters between 2001 and 2005; followed by a movement to a conference school company developed structure from 2007 to 2014. Following a review of current policy approaches, the ASA system has identified the need to return to a consistent approach across all conference school companies and schools.

A broad application of duty of care requires that the importance of safe practices be acknowledged within every Australian Adventist School. Consequently, ASA, conference school companies and schools are committed to adopting appropriate child protection policies and procedures, the ASA Code of Conduct, screening of employees and job descriptions for all positions.

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3.2 Governance and culture

Child Protection Policy & Procedures

A commitment to the safety of children and young people is stated in the child protection *policy* for each conference School Company and school. Child protection *procedures* or actions that will be taken to meet this commitment form a central part of the policy.

The child protection policy in place at conference school company or school level typically states the duty of all those employed by, or involved with, the given school company or school to prevent harm to children with whom they have contact. Further, the child protection policy of each conference School Company and school requires staff members and volunteers to comply with reporting obligations concerning suspected or discovered abuse. Roles and responsibilities for ensuring implementation and accountability are also identified in the child protection policy for each conference School Company and school.

Each conference school company and school is committed to their child protection policy being accessible and understood by staff members, volunteers, children, young people, parents, and other stakeholders. Each conference school company and school's child protection policy continues to be developed in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that it is relevant to given circumstances, and can be effectively implemented.

Current & Past Employee Policy & Procedures

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools are committed to procedures for investigating a complaint regarding a former employee within the Australian Adventist school system or a deceased employee within the Australian Adventist school system.

Risk Management

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools are committed to reducing or minimising situations where children and young people may be exposed to the risk of abuse. This commitment includes assessing all aspects of the given school's program from a risk to the safety and wellbeing of the child. Risk management approaches are influenced by a range of factors specific to each school including the size, location, funding arrangements, staffing structure and focus of activity. Effective risk management strategies are acknowledged as needing to be transparent, well understood and diverse, to take account of the increased level of risk associated with the specific nature of some activities and the vulnerability of particular groups or individuals.

Code of Conduct

The Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) Code of Conduct promotes positive work practices and establishes boundaries concerning acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the relationships between school employees and volunteers and the children and young people with whom they work. The ASA Code of Conduct seeks to provide guidance about the behaviour, relationships, attitudes and responsibilities expected of all school employees and volunteers, and outlines the process if the Code is not observed. ASA takes an inclusive approach to reviewing and updating its Code of Conduct and openly communicates the Code to school employees, volunteers, children, parents and members of the public.

Privacy and Data Protection

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference schools' companies and schools are fully aware of their privacy obligations, and respect the privacy rights of children as well as those people who provide information. Due to the sensitive nature of personal information, ASA, conference school companies and schools will continue to establish, implement and review policies and procedures that provide safeguards regarding the collection, use and disclosure of such information.

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Child protection is a community responsibility

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference schools' companies and schools are fully aware that the responsibility for child protection is more than can be handled by Government agencies alone. As such school companies and schools need to develop policies, procedures and connections to support agencies that can provide counselling and other means of support to victims and non-offending family members. Schools are increasingly asked to support children who are at risk but don't yet make threshold of reporting to government agencies. For this reason school companies and schools need to develop policies, procedures and connections to agencies that will assist in supporting dysfunctional families to reduce the risk of harm to these children.

3.3 Participation and empowerment of children and young people

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools acknowledge that a central dynamic of the abuse of children is the exploitation of power in order to gain submission or silence. There are particular power relationships inherent in schools where there may be close relationships between children and adults in positions of trust and authority. ASA, conference school companies and schools acknowledge that practices focused upon empowerment and participation of children and school structures and systems which encourage children to be listened to are key aspects of building capacity for safe learning communities, and demonstrate commitment to creating a child-friendly school culture.

Enabling and promoting the participation of children and young people

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools seriously consider children's views and seek to develop a culture where the knowledge, experience and contribution of children influences policies and practices. ASA schools create opportunities for children to take on leadership roles, and to participate in planning, policy development and decision-making. ASA schools are committed to continuous improvement and this can be enhanced through engaging children and young people in the review of policies and practices, and system improvement.

Inclusive and empowering language

The Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) Code of Conduct, complaints management policies and other relevant documents reflects a commitment to child safety and are expressed in language, which takes into account cultural differences and is not alienating for children.

Strategies to reduce the potential for undiscovered or ongoing harm

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) schools ensure that children have opportunities to share their concerns in safe ways and their systemic values affirms the validity of child focused and inclusive complaints processes. ASA schools ensure children and young people are aware of their school's commitment to child safety; providing protective behaviours training adapted to the needs of the children and young people; and encouraging children and young people to speak out. Each ASA School develops strategies for communication and engagement with all their children and young people. Providing information about the availability of independent advocacy or persons with whom children and young people may discuss concerns about their treatment or experience is part of the empowerment process.

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3.4 Human resource management

Job descriptions

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools provide employees and volunteers with job descriptions that provide a clear understanding of what is expected of them, their responsibilities and accountability. Regular review of job descriptions is an important feature of ongoing performance management.

Recruitment and selection practices acknowledge the importance of child safety

When recruiting and selecting employees and volunteers, Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools take all necessary steps towards maximising the safety of children and young people. Job advertisements should clearly state the commitment to child safety and information packages for potential applicants should include a school company or the School's Child Protection Policy, ASA Code of Conduct, and screening and complaints / grievances procedures. The written statement of appointment to a position also references what is expected in terms of commitment and responsibility for child safety.

ASA, conference schools companies and schools adopt multiple selection techniques for prospective employees and volunteers. Although the conduct of criminal history checks is necessary for teacher registration and integral to establishing the fitness and propriety of persons, it is only one of a range of measures. Confirmation of identity, verification of qualifications, professional registration where applicable and reference checks, are also preliminary steps used in recruitment and selection.

ASA, conference school companies and schools also utilise interview processes which highlight the priority of child safety; work history reports and thorough reference checks which ask specific questions about the applicant's suitability for working with children and young people. ASA, conference school companies and schools are careful to avoid unfair or unlawful discrimination and interview questions are asked that relate to selection criteria developed from job descriptions. ASA, conference school companies and schools include a demonstrated commitment to maintaining a safe environment for children and young people in selection criteria.

Staff Induction and Training, Support, Supervision and Performance Management

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools view staff support, supervision, orientation and induction, as opportunities to minimise the risk of abuse as they reveal information about values, attitudes, expectations and school-based practices that otherwise may remain hidden.

Complaints management and disciplinary proceedings

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference schools' companies and schools understand the need to establish guidelines for listening to members of the wider community including children and dealing with concerns or complaints about alleged behaviour by members of the school community towards a child that is contrary to the Code of Conduct or places the child at risk of harm, and disclosure or discovery of abuse. School-based incident reporting and management arrangements make it clear that members of the wider community including children can approach any person in the school to express concerns about their treatment and they will be taken seriously. Likewise, school-based arrangements also inform employees and volunteers about whom they can approach and/or are mandated to report to and express their concerns.

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools understand the imperative to investigate allegations of improper conduct by current employees, contractors and volunteers in the school community. If the allegation relates to conduct which may constitute a criminal offence the allegation must be referred to police in the local jurisdiction where the offence is alleged to have occurred. If the police choose not to investigate the conference school company is to investigate.

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Allegations of conduct by current employees, contractors and volunteers that occurred while working at schools not under a conference school company will be investigated by the current school company. Allegations of conduct by former employees, contractors and volunteers who have maintained a connection with the wider Adventist Community will be investigated by Safe Place Services.

Findings in investigations will be done on the basis of the evidence gathered and the level of proof will be done on the balance of probabilities. The investigations will balance the interests of the following groups:

1. The needs of the victims for confidentiality, justice and closure.
2. The needs of wider community for the prosecution of the investigation to deliver a finding and for the timely implementation of the recommendations from the investigation
3. The needs of the person subject of the allegation for procedural fairness, confidentiality and closure.

Schools' Companies may choose to use the services of independent investigation agencies in situations where there may be a perceived bias in using investigators from the wider school community.

ASA, conference school companies and schools are committed to all complaints processes and disciplinary proceedings ensuring procedural fairness for a person suspected of abusing a child. Complaints management and disciplinary procedures are included in ASA, conference school companies and schools ongoing review of policies and procedures as part of its commitment to continuous improvement.

3.5 Education and training

Awareness and understanding of child abuse and responsibilities

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools recognise that informing and educating employees (including Directors, Principals and staff members), volunteers, children and their families about child abuse is fundamental to creating a safe community. Risk management and other preventative strategies rely upon people understanding how child abuse can occur within a school, knowing what to look for, and accepting a sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of children and young people. ASA, conference school companies and schools are committed to the safety of children and young people and this commitment is reinforced through adopting a combination of induction training and refresher training about child abuse and responsibilities to maintain an aware culture within the Australian Adventist school system.

Support in building, maintaining and strengthening child-safe capacity

Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), conference school companies and schools are committed to allocating appropriate resourcing for education and training and for initiatives to create and maintain safe school environments.

Summary

The development and implementation of Adventist Schools Australia's National Framework for building the capacity of its schools as safe communities supports its moral and legal responsibilities to ensure that children and young people in the care of an Australian Adventist school are safe.

This National Framework seeks to provide an important foundation for a more coherent and cohesive approach by Adventist Schools Australia, conference school companies and schools to creating safe communities where both children and adults are able to belong, believe and become.

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