

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Croydon Special Developmental School (Croydon SDS) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment, which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

The school has a **zero tolerance of child abuse**. At Croydon SDS, we strive to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at our school at all times. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently. We are committed to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive school environment where all students can be happy, confident and resilient, regardless of their sexual or gender identity, cultural background, disability or other circumstances. We take account of the diversity of all children, including the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and vulnerable children.

Any physical contact with children or young people must be appropriate to the delivery of the programs and services based on the needs of the individual child/young person rather than the needs of any staff. This Statement of Commitment aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

All visitors, volunteers, staff, casual staff and any placements must have a working with children check (WWC) /VIT registration and undertake an induction in regards to Child Safety at our school. Contractors are encouraged to do work outside of school hours or on curriculum days, when students are not present, however, in the event that they have to enter the school they must have a WWC and complete an induction, or be accompanied at all times by a staff member.

Safeguarding children underpins our policies and procedures in relation to the protection of children and young people and guides the following:

- Taking a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- Valuing and empowering children to participate wherever possible in decisions which affect their lives;
- Fostering a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
- Respecting diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Providing written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- Engaging only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- Ensuring children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
- Reporting suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;

- Sharing information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
- Valuing the input of and communicating regularly with families and carers.

Safeguarding children underpins our practices in relation to the following:

- Our open and effective communication with children and young people and their parents, which is valued
- The screening and recruitment of our personnel
- The behaviour of our staff towards children and young people
- The induction and training of our staff about safe guarding children and young people
- Our response to the abuse and neglect of children if it occurs
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
- Our maintenance of a safeguarding culture in our school

Our staff are required to:

- Undergo an extensive screening process including a National Criminal Records Check (and/or a Working with Children Check.
- Behave professionally and respectfully and with care towards children and young people including not acting outside the boundaries of their duties, or using their position with the school to solicit work or initiate contact with children and young people who are attending our school.
- Understand the important responsibility they have to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation either by staff, or anything that occurs outside the scope of our school.
- Continue to create and maintain a child safe culture.

We are dedicated to protecting the children and young people in our school. Staff undertake training such as Protecting the Safety of Children and Young People, staff meeting Child Safety presentations, Mandatory Reporting Professional Learning module, and working with organisations such as DHHS and the Australian Childhood Foundation.

Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations

We consider any form of child abuse including emotional, physical and sexual abuse, family violence, grooming or neglect as intolerable under any circumstances.

We have a legal and moral responsibility to protect children and young people, and will ensure that any incident of suspected child abuse is promptly and appropriately dealt with.

Staff will follow the Croydon SDS Managing Disclosures Flow Chart and report any issues raised by students that they find concerning to school leadership immediately.

Our staff are required to report any suspected child abuse to the Principal or the Assistant Principal. Staff will be supported to contact Child Protection and/or the police. Croydon SDS will cooperate with Child Protection and police and any other agencies to protect children and young people from harm.

Croydon SDS Practice and Behaviour guidelines

Our staff and any volunteers, students on placement, and visitors are required to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct towards children and young people.

The following guidelines underline our practice and behaviour:

Transport

Students attending our school are to be transported only with prior consent to use the Crown School bus service provided by DET, or by prior authorisation from a parent/guardian for their child to travel with a carer/relative, agency or in emergencies with a staff member.

Staff are required to submit details about the proposed journey, form of transport, and details of other staff who will be present to the Principal or Assistant Principal before transporting a student in an emergency situation.

Overnight camps

Overnight camps occur only with the authorisation of the Principal, and a parent/guardian.

Standards of conduct that must be observed include:

- Providing children and young people with privacy with any bathing and dressing, or assisting them with personal care
- Not leaving children or young people under the supervision or protection of unauthorised staff
- The right of young children or young people to talk or indicate by their behaviour, that they feel unsafe, or distressed during the stay, and their parents may need to be contacted.

Positive Behaviour Support

We support our students to be as independent as possible. We promote the practice of positive behaviour support strategies by all staff to ensure a safe and positive learning environment and the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and staff at our school. We have developed Croydon SDS Positive Behaviour Resources for all staff to follow. All strategies are fair, respectful and appropriate to the situation and the developmental stage of the children and young people involved.

All of our students have complex communication needs and unique goals and abilities within the education setting. In order to support the varied and diverse needs of all of our students across the school, and empower them to communicate and participate, we use verbal communication alongside a variety of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) strategies.

No staff member is to take action involving verbal or physical punishment or any form of treatment that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating.

Professional Boundaries

Our staff are advised not to act outside the confines of their duties, as specified in their position description when working with students to deliver educational programs. At Croydon SDS, we discourage staff to engage with students who attend the school, in activities outside of school hours, such as baby-sitting. Staff need to make the Principal aware of any such activities.

Photographs of children and young people

Students are only photographed by our staff while engaged in programs or activities if:

- Prior consent from parents/guardians has been obtained
- The context is directly related to participation in educational programs
- The child is appropriately dressed
- School staff may use their own personal devices to capture images of students for reasonable and legitimate educational purposes. If this occurs, staff are expected to upload the images to the school database and delete the images from their device within a week of the images being captured.

RELATED POLICIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Croydon SDS Child Safety Code of Conduct

Croydon SDS Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

Croydon SDS Managing Disclosures Flow Chart

This Statement of Commitment was endorsed by school council on March 25 2019 and updated on May 27, 2019.

It will be reviewed in October 2020 and annually thereafter.