



Bush School Handbook

St Pius X

Darebin Creek Forest Park

Updated January 2023

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# **Declaration**

All staff participating in the Bush School sessions must read this handbook and sign the declaration below.

By signing this declaration, you agree that you have read and understood the procedures and policies of this handbook.

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| **Name of staff member** | **Signature of staff member** | **Date** |
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This handbook was last updated on: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# **Vision Statement**

The St Pius X Bush School Programme in partnership with Nature Play Learning was initiated with children’s wellbeing, voice and agency in mind. Bush School offers numerous exciting benefits to children, their learning and their community, which are in line with school initiatives and Department of Education and Training (DET) recommendations.

Bush School is an outdoor, child-led, inquiry-based approach to learning. First pioneered in Denmark, developed in the UK and now gaining momentum in Australia, Australian Bush Schools had their origins in Nature Play Queensland in 2014. This organisation was formed in response to studies showing that children in Australia, on average, spent less than 2 hours outdoors every day. Case studies reported on the Nature Play Queensland website show improved student agency of their learning, leading to great benefits in self-esteem, especially for children with special needs; improvements in motor skills, attention span and focus; and greater connection to the community and the outdoors, facilitated by the children themselves.

Recent research by the DET has shown the immeasurable benefits of student voice and agency; i.e. children being able to have a say in their learning, with adults acting as guides when needed. According to the Department website, “Authentic student voice provides opportunities for students to collaborate and make decisions with adults around what and how they learn and how their learning is assessed. This is known to lead to improved educational outcomes… Student voice and agency are intrinsically linked. Agency gives students the power to direct and take responsibility for their learning, creating independent and self-regulating learners.”

Student voice and agency are inherent in Bush School. The structure of the program allows for student-led learning, with the teacher providing tools, resources and guidance if required.

Therefore, our vision is:

**To foster a sense of wellbeing, resilience, agency and connection to nature in every child, through child-led, authentic, outdoor learning experiences.**

# **Rules and Expectations**

In an outdoor setting, as in any other educational setting, it is important to have clear expectations and boundaries for student behaviour. This is to ensure that every student can be safe, engaged in their learning, and happy.

In addition to rules for expected behaviour, Bush School also operates within physical boundaries on the site. These will be marked with coloured rope at the children’s eye level or delineated by clear landmarks (e.g. the path, the fence around the park, etc).

## **Bush School Rules**

* Listen and follow instructions.
* Stick with the group.
* Stay inside the boundaries.
* Be kind to the environment and each other.
* No pick, no lick!

## **Parks Victoria Guidelines for Bush Schools**

**Tread lightly in parks and reserves**

National parks and reserves are special places that are managed to conserve their beauty, biological diversity, and cultural significance. They are places for current and future generations to connect with nature. Parks Victoria encourages children to be hands-on in parks, engaging all their senses. However, it’s important to make sure that your visit doesn’t impact on natural or cultural park values.

When planning your next outdoor class, follow these minimal impact guidelines to make sure you have a safe, fun time with minimal impact on the environment.

**Know before you go**

* Find out about the park you are going to visit and what you can do there.
* Check the weather before you go and make sure you have the right equipment, first aid kit, clothes and footwear with you.

**Keep our parks wild**

* Respect animals’ homes by leaving plants, shells, logs and even rocks where you find them.
* Animals are healthiest eating their natural foods, so please don’t share your food with them.
* Never walk up to wildlife. It might become frightened and try to protect itself.

**Leave no trace**

* Leave everything as you find it. The best souvenirs of your adventure are your memories.
* Respect any evidence of the past that you might find. Parks protect our history.
* Keep yourself safe and protect the park by staying on walking tracks and not damaging vegetation.
* Take all food scraps and rubbish home to put in the bin or recycle.
* Only light fires in the fireplaces provided and always put the fire out completely.

## **Parks Victoria: Healthy Parks, Healthy People guidelines**

* Our health depends on healthy ecosystems
* Healthy park ecosystems provide clean water, fresh air and pollination
* Time in nature is good for our physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing
* Parks build strong economies and healthy communities.

# **Staff and Volunteers**

## **Child Safety**

**All Bush School Staff must have a current Working With Children (WWC) Check or VIT registration. In line with the St Pius X Working With Children Check policy, all volunteers to the program must also hold a WWC Check.**

Please refer to the appendices A (St Pius X Child Safe Policy) and B (Code of Conduct) for staff and volunteer expectations.

## **Staff/Volunteer Roles and Expectations**

All staff and volunteers attending bush school sessions should remain vigilant at all times, ensuring they are responsible for ALL children, not just their own. It is not appropriate to bring younger siblings along to sessions due to safety concerns. Please refer to Appendix C Designated Roles and Responsibilities for each person’s roles during the session. It is the bush school leader’s responsibility to ensure all staff and volunteers understand their specific responsibilities.

# **OHS Policies**

Bush School operates under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Worksafe Victoria legislation.

Employers have a general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and any equipment used by them.

Employees are responsible for the health and safety of themselves and any other people who might be affected by their acts.

In line with the Act, a Risk Benefit Assessment is created and updated every term for every Bush School activity. This is part of the handbook.

**All Bush School Staff must have a current Working With Children (WWC) Check or VIT registration. In line with the St Pius X Working With Children Check policy, all volunteers to the program must also hold a WWC Check.**

## **COVID-19 procedures**

In order to minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission during Bush School sessions, we ask that any child, staff member or volunteer who is experiencing any symptoms of coronavirus does not attend Bush School until they have received a negative test result. In addition, we will be providing hand sanitiser and encouraging regular hand sanitising during communal activities, after toileting and before eating.

Communal equipment will be sanitised between sessions. Disinfectant spray and wet wipes will be provided in the event that a child puts any equipment into their mouth. Adults on site should practise social distancing of 1.5 metres where possible.

We will be following government guidelines as they are updated and accordingly make any necessary changes to these procedures.

## **First Aid**

The Bush School Leader has current first aid training. The first aid kit is kept at the base camp and can be identified by a white cross on a green background. The snake kit, comprising compression bandages and a red pen, is also kept within the first aid kit (see First Aid Kit section, page 7).

## **Food hygiene and safety**

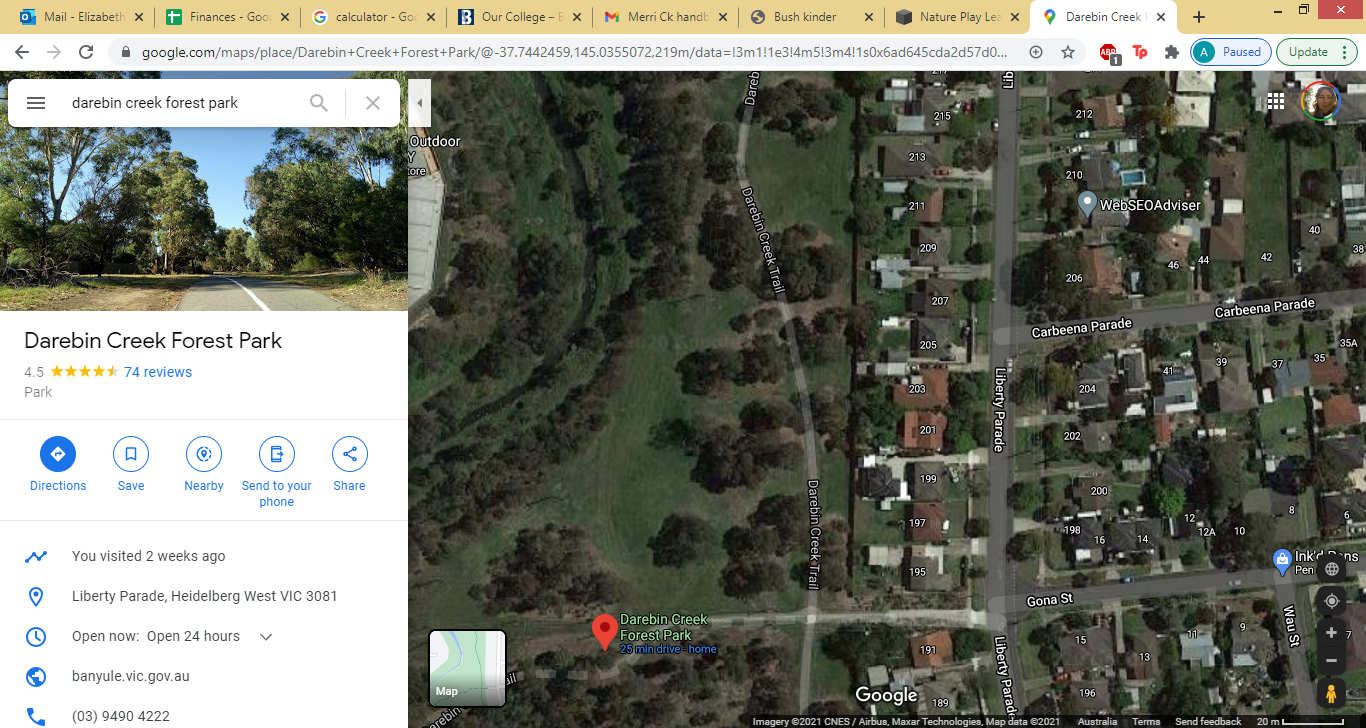
Children should avoid bringing high risk foods to Bush School (foods such as peanuts, which may cause anaphylaxis) and should not share food. Food should be consumed while seated on the group mat. If there are known allergens within the group, these should be communicated on the participant’s medical form.

**All children must bring their own water bottle filled with water to each session. There is no water available at the site.**

All participants should ensure they wash/sanitise their hands following toileting and prior to eating snacks. Hand sanitiser will be provided.

# **Location**

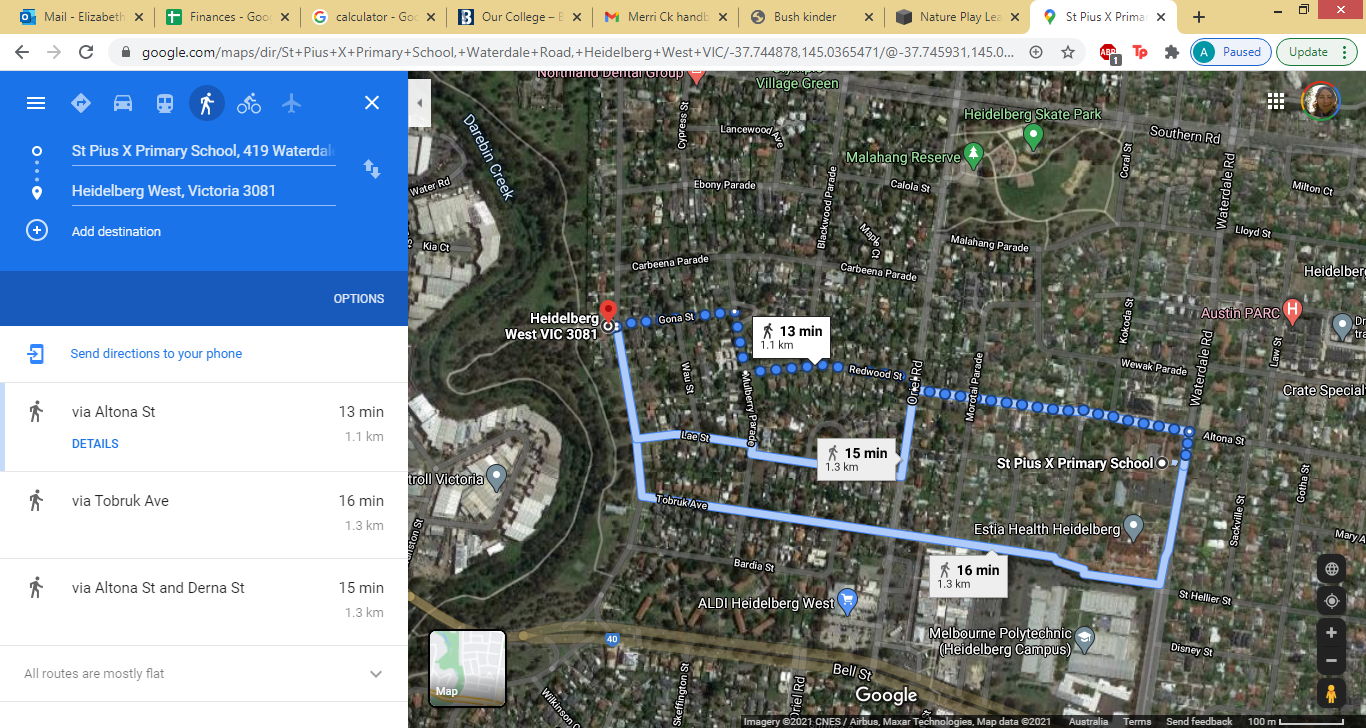
The St Pius X Bush School is located between the Darebin Creek Forest Park and the Southern Road Wetlands, near the Gona St entrance to the reserve. This will be the Bush School meeting point and evacuation point.



Example of Bush School base camp site

Bush School entrance

Children and teachers will walk to the Bush School site using the following route:



Care must be taken when crossing Oriel Rd. Children will be instructed in road safety procedures such as looking left and right for traffic, walking across roads, following the teacher’s instructions, etc. They will practise these procedures in the familiar school environment prior to their first Bush School session. It is a good idea to have the children cross the road in two groups, each supervised by Bush School staff and volunteers. Teachers can also direct traffic by standing in the middle of the road and halting cars until all children have crossed safely.

# **Bush School Sessional Procedures**

9:00 Bush School staff and volunteers who are not walking to the site with the group to set up base camp with the following materials:

* Boundary rope or cones
* Toilet and tent
* Large Indigenous welcome mat
* Bush school themed books
* Sensory basket

Bush School Leader to conduct a safety sweep of the area (see Safety Sweep Procedures, page 14).

9:00-9:30: Teachers and children walk to the Bush School meeting point (the Gona St entrance to the Darebin Creek Forest Park). Before leaving school, attendance is recorded and left with the office, children should be advised to visit the toilet, and teachers check that children have all necessary equipment.

9:30: Welcome and Tuning In. Acknowledgement of Country is spoken. The group gathers on the mat and routine welcome procedures are followed. Engage the children in a mindfulness tuning in exercise, to get their senses engaged in the outdoors. Introduce/revisit the rules. During this time other activities around the site to be set up.

9:40 (approx.): Tour of the site (for the first session, and as needed each session to reinforce routines). Show the children the week’s learning activities (craft station, mud kitchen, bug corner, digging corner, boat building, rope swing, tree climbing, etc) and briefly model each one. Explain toileting procedures (potty for solid waste, a “tree wee” for liquid waste).

Allow the children to choose the learning activity that they wish to pursue.

When they are hungry, children can eat their snack on the mat.

The bush school leader may choose to include a storytime or group activity such as a walk at different times throughout the session.

11:40 Shortly before reflection time, give children time reminders: “This is your ten-minute reminder.” “This is your five-minute reminder.” etc. This is so that children can prepare themselves to finish up what they are doing. During this time, helpers are beginning to pack equipment away.

11:50: Short reflection time.

Children and teachers pack up the site – “leave everything as we found it.”

12:00 Teachers gather children and take them back to school by 12:30. Bush School staff/volunteers pack up any remaining equipment and check the site is left as found, including taking down cubbies, removing any materials brought in.

# **Essential Bush School equipment**

## **OHS and Personal Protective Equipment**

* Water bottles
* Sunscreen
* Insect repellent
* Hand sanitiser
* Toilet and toilet tent
* Protective gloves
* Spare clothing, including hats
* Carry bags for wet clothing
* Mobile phone
* Large tarpaulin for shelter if needed

## **First aid kit**

* Band-Aids
* Saline solution
* Alcohol swabs
* Cotton wool
* Crepe bandage
* Triangular bandage
* Snakebite compression bandage
* Black pen
* Medical bags of any individual students, staff or volunteers

## **Learning equipment**

* Indigenous welcome mat
* Story stones
* Story books
* Puppets
* Sensory basket
* Bug corner equipment, including:
  + magnifying glasses
  + bug observation jars
  + reference books/flora and fauna cards
* Trowels
* Buckets (small)
* Rope (approx. 30m, cut into five 6m long pieces)
* Patty pans or egg cartons
* Paint colour strips
* Double sided sticky card
* Mud kitchen
* Paint brushes
* Water buckets
* Binoculars

# **Clothing requirements**

In the interests of health and safety, all children and adults attending the Bush School session must observe the following clothing requirements:

* Broad-brimmed hat and sunscreen (Terms 1 and 4)
* Rain jacket and trousers (Terms 2 and 3, or on days of forecasted rain)
* Layers of clothing for cold weather (Terms 2 and 3)
* Gloves (Terms 2 and 3)
* Hat (Terms 2 and 3)
* A top that covers the shoulders
* Long trousers
* Socks and spare socks
* Sturdy, closed, water resistant shoes with a good grip (e.g. runners, gumboots or hiking boots)
* An emergency change of clothes and a carry bag for dirty/wet clothing

# **SunSmart Policy**

The Bush School SunSmart Policy is as follows:

## **Introduction**

A balance of ultraviolet radiation (UV) exposure is important for health. Too much of the sun’s UV can cause sunburn, skin and eye damage and skin cancer. Exposure to the sun’s UV during childhood and adolescence is associated with an increased risk of skin cancer in later life. Too little UV from the sun can lead to low vitamin D levels. Vitamin D is essential for healthy bones and muscles, and for general health.

## **Purpose**

To create environments and encourage behaviours which reflect a healthy UV exposure balance, ensuring some sun exposure for vitamin D while minimising the risk of skin cancer.

* Ensure all children and staff have some UV exposure for vitamin D.
* Ensure all children and staff are well protected from too much UV exposure by using a combination of sun protection measures during the daily local sun protection times (issued whenever UV levels are 3 and above).
* Ensure the outdoor environment is sun safe and provides shade for children and staff.
* Ensure children are encouraged and supported to develop independent sun protection skills to help them be responsible for their own sun protection.
* Support duty of care requirements.
* Support appropriate OHS strategies to minimise UV risk and associated harms for staff and visitors.

## **Implementation**

1. Seek shade

The availability of shade is considered when planning all other outdoor activities.

* Students are encouraged to use available areas of shade when outside.
* Students are expected to bring hats and sun protective clothing; however, any students who do not have appropriate hats or outdoor clothing are asked to play in the shade or a suitable area protected from the sun.
* Bush School staff carry a tarpaulin as part of their essential equipment, which can be erected as a shade cloth if necessary.

2. Slip on sun protective clothing

* Sun protective clothing is compulsory for all children and adults participating in Bush School sessions (see *Clothing Requirements*, above).

3. Slap on a hat

* All children and staff are required to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears (legionnaire, broad-brimmed or bucket hat) during a Bush School session. Peak caps and visors are not considered a suitable alternative.

4. Slop on sunscreen

* SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen will be provided for children to use at Bush School. Children must apply this sunscreen themselves.
* Children are reminded to apply sunscreen at the beginning of the session in Terms 1 and 4, or on days where the UV Index is high enough for sun protection to be recommended.

5. Slide on sunglasses (if practical)

* Where practical, children and adults are encouraged to wear close-fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and cover as much of the eye area as possible.

Learning and skills

* Sun protection and vitamin D are included in the curriculum for all year levels.

Engaging children, educators, staff and families

* SunSmart behaviour is regularly reinforced and promoted to the whole school community through newsletters, school website, staff and parent meetings, school assemblies, student and teacher activities and on student enrolment/new staff orientation.

## **Extreme Weather Policy**

On the day of the session, the Bush School Leader will check the Bureau of Meteorology website (BOM) for any weather warnings. If the weather is deemed to be too extreme, the Bush School session will be cancelled.

Should the weather change and become extreme during a Bush School Session, the Bush School Leader will either:

* End the session and advise teachers to take the children back to school if safe to do so, or:
* Provide shelter for the children until the extreme weather has subsided.

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| **Weather Warning** | **Action** |
| Extreme heat (above 36°) | Bush School session cancelled.  Note: there is no pre-set minimum temperature.  Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very  cold days (see Clothing Requirements section). |
| Hot weather (approx. 27° - 35°) | Bush School will run unless advised otherwise by the Bush School Leader.  Children will be reminded to wear all protective clothing and drink plenty of water.  Some activities may be modified to be lower-energy. |
| Strong wind warning | Bush School session cancelled. |
| Strong wind (no warning) | Bush School Leader will use judgement to determine if the session will run.  Base camp location may be changed if there are loose branches above. |
| Storm with lightning | Bush School session cancelled. |
| Storm with lightning that begins while onsite | Bush School group moved to a safe location away from trees or metal.  Teachers to take children back to school once storm has passed. |
| Torrential rain/hail | Bush School session cancelled. |
| Torrential rain/hail that begins while onsite | Bush School Leader to erect shelter with a tarp for all participants until weather clears. |

# **Toileting procedures**

Children will be advised to use the toilets at school before leaving for Bush School and upon their return, but toileting provisions will be made. A pop-up tent will be provided for privacy with a flushing camping toilet available for faeces, which will then be disposed of in a nearby bin. Children who just need to urinate will be encouraged to do a “tree wee” away from the group, assisted by a supervising adult. The tent will be provided in the case of needing more privacy. Antibacterial handwash, water and/or hand sanitiser will be available for washing hands after going to the toilet.

# **Emergency incident procedures – bushfire, missing child, major/minor incident, lockdown, evacuation**

## **Bushfire**

Given the suburban location of Bush School, bushfire is a low risk. On hot days, particularly in Terms 1 and 4, the Bush School Leader will check the BOM and the Vic Emergency website for any current bushfire warnings. On days of extreme heat and concurrent fire danger of Severe or above, Bush School sessions will not run.

In the event that bushfire is suspected or encountered, call 000 (fire brigade) and evacuate the site, ensuring first that all children and parents are accounted for.

## **Missing child**

**Prevention**

* A boundary around the base camp should be designated using a brightly coloured rope half a metre from the ground. Areas of water will be excluded from these boundaries and not visited unless an adult is supervising.
* All children will be signed in and counted regularly during the session.
* Each child will have a lanyard or a name tag with the Bush School Leader’s contact details on it.
* When walking around the site, there will be an adult at the front and one behind. Children will be instructed to walk between these adults.
* There will be adults supervising the site boundaries at all times.

**In the event of a missing child**

* Gather the rest of the group and keep them calm by reading them a story.
* Ask one staff member/volunteer to check the Darebin Creek in case of a water incident.
* Organise any remaining available staff members to search the area, gradually moving outwards from the base camp.
* Notify the police if the child is not found within a reasonable period.

## **Major incident**

In the event of a major incident, uninvolved children should be gathered by a designated staff member or parent helper and engaged by listening to a story until the incident has been resolved by the Bush School Leader.

## **Minor incident**

When a minor incident occurs, the Bush School Leader or other staff should work with the child/ren involved to resolve the problem. Restorative practice (What happened? What were you thinking at the time? What are you thinking now? Who was affected? How can I make the situation better?) can be used with either major or minor incidents to find a no-blame solution with each child taking responsibility for their involvement in the problem.

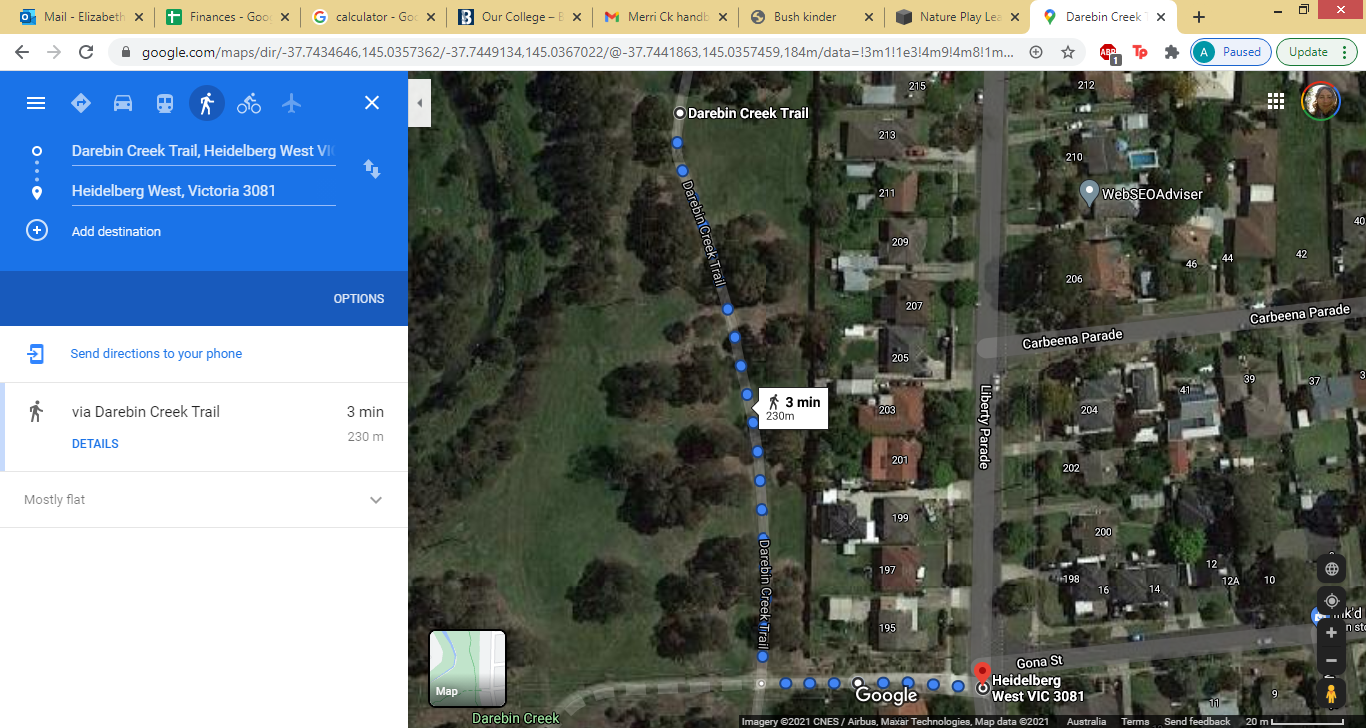
## **Lockdown**

In the event of a lockdown on site, the group should gather together with adults on the outside protecting the children. The Bush School Leader should take a headcount and then keep the group together until notified by the police that it is safe to move. In the event of a lockdown at the school while Bush School is in progress:

* The names of children attending Bush School will have been given to the office.
* Bush School leader to stay in communication with the school until the school lockdown has ended and it is safe to return.

## **Evacuation**

Should it be necessary to evacuate the Bush School site, all children and parents should gather at the base camp. The Bush School Leader should complete a head count and then the group should calmly move together to the nearest suburban street, as shown in the map below:



In the event of an evacuation at school while Bush School is in progress:

* Attendance lists of children at Bush School will have been provided to the school office staff so that all these children are accounted for
* Teachers from the school to communicate with Bush School Leader by phone until evacuation has finished.

# **Snake Safety**

Snakes are protected by federal law, and it is illegal to capture or kill them. Snakes are generally unobtrusive, more afraid of humans than vice versa, and are unlikely to attack unless provoked first. Most snake bites happen when people try to catch or kill a snake.

Instructing every adult and child in snake safety greatly minimises the risk of snake bite and empowers children to coexist safely with snakes.

**Bushwalking rules**

* Always be alert when in the bush. Look ahead and where you are stepping.
* Stick to wide paths and tracks only.
* Do **NOT** walk through long grass or let children run ahead.
* Check behind logs. Do **NOT** step over logs; instead, step on them in case there is a snake on the other side.
* Stamp through the bush. Snakes hear vibrations, not sounds, and will be deterred by stamping.
* Wear boots that cover your ankles, thick socks and long pants.
* Be careful of what you pick up or turn over. Snakes can be under rocks and logs. Turn it outwards, away from you, instead of towards you.

**What to do if you see a snake**

1. Yell out **“SNAKE!”**
2. **FREEZE**
3. Back away quietly
4. Alert others.

All children will be instructed in this procedure as part of the sessional routines.

**Snake First Aid**

* Follow DRSABCD.
* Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance. Note the time of bite.
* Lie the patient down and ensure they are **completely still**. Reassure the patient.
* If on a limb, apply an elasticised roller bandage (10–15 cm wide) over the bite site as soon as possible. Apply a further elasticised roller bandage (10–15 cm wide), starting just above the fingers or toes and moving upwards on the bitten limb as far as can be reached. Use clothing or other material if an elasticised roller bandage is not available. Apply the bandage as tightly as possible to the limb.
* Immobilise the bandaged limb using splints.
* Keep the patient lying down and completely still (immobilised).
* Write down the time of the bite and when the bandage was applied. If possible, mark the location of the bite site (if known) on the skin with a pen, or photograph the site.
* Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.

# **Safety Sweep Procedures**

A safety sweep will be carried out at the site before each session by a staff member to identify and manage any obvious risks, as outlined in our Risk Benefit Assessment. Ideally this will be done prior to the children arriving on site; or, if necessary, one adult will engage the children in warm-up routines while the others conduct the safety sweep.

The Safety Sweep form can be found in Appendix A.

# **Risk/Benefit Assessment**

A significant part of the Bush School philosophy is to empower children to learn how to assess, manage and take risks responsibly for themselves. This is a vital skill for life and an essential part of building children’s resilience and problem solving skills.

All Bush School activities carry a risk, usually minor; however, they also carry a significant benefit which makes it important to engage in them. The St Pius X Bush School Risk/Benefit Assessment will measure and compare the risks and benefits of Bush School activities, and discuss effective risk management strategies.

The Risk Benefit Assessment can be found in Appendix E.

# **Ecological Impact and Three-Year Sustainability Management Plan**

Bush School, like all outdoor activities, has the potential for ecological impact on the site. The following Three-Year Sustainability Management Plan aims to manage and reduce that impact, using a consultative approach with other stakeholders of the land, and involving the Bush School children in its implementation.

## **Impact of St Pius X Bush School**

Possible damage to flora could include:

* branches broken during tree climbing
* branches broken when collected for cubby building or craft activities
* flowers, leaves, moss, fungi picked
* trampling of grasses or ground covers when moving to and from the site or around the site.

Damage to groundcovers or grasses can be minimised by walking as a close group in pairs or in single file and by having suitable boundaries. Bushland areas containing precious or rare plants should be avoided except under the supervision of the ranger. The Southern Road Wetlands, which are ecologically sensitive, should be avoided unless supervised.

All children will be reminded of the “No pick, no lick” and “Leave no trace” rules at the start of each session to avoid damage to flora.

Branches and other natural materials should be brought in for craft activities or cubby building, or should be sources through council. They should also be removed from the site once the session is complete.

Specific trees should be selected for tree climbing, to ensure safety and minimisation of damage to branches. Bark is an important habitat and should not be stripped from trees or fallen logs.

Damage to soil and insects that live in the soil could occur from digging/mud kitchen activities. This should be minimised by choosing a particular site for digging each week and ensuring that soil is replaced at the end of the session and covered over with mulch. This will help reduce the growth of weeds in exposed soil. If ants or other insects are noted in the area, an alternative site should be sourced.

Possible impact on other fauna might include noise disturbances, being hurt when picked up or touched, or from damage to habitat. Ongoing discussions should be held with participants to ensure that animals and insects are highly respected. A logbook of flora and fauna observed will help monitor impact.

In certain sites, the facilitator will need to make participants aware of Aboriginal artifacts that may be present (such as rocks) and ensure children do not take them home with them.

## **Three Year Plan**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **First year** | **Second year** | **Third year** |
| * Make contact with the land management groups and other users of the space (Darebin and Banyule City Councils, Parks Victoria, Darebin Creek Management Committee, local Aboriginal groups) * Create a Risk Assessment which addresses the risks to the land. * Scope out suitable sites for base camp which are flat, ecologically sound, not overly intrusive of animals’ habitats, and will not disturb other users of the site. Choose more than one possible site. * Observe the site season by season, keeping a written and photo journal of the changes. Involve children in these observations. * Conduct water quality assessments and clean-ups of the area with support from Peter Grenfell (DCMC) and Tom Crawshaw (Banyule City Council). * Use the Darebin Creek Forest Park Flora and Fauna resource and link with citizen science programs to record flora and fauna sightings at the site. * Read the Parks Victoria Bush Kinder handbook for more information about minimal impact outdoor education. * Establish Bush School rules and boundaries, explaining their purpose for sustainability management. | * Ongoing review of the impact to the site. * Continue to keep a journal and note any significant changes or deterioration to the site. If any are observed, consider moving base camp location and modifying activities. * Get involved with Friends group, DCMC or Council planting days. * Create supplementary habitats by making bird boxes, insect hotels, etc to mitigate the impact on habitats. | * Evaluate all previous actions and take further action from there. * Consider alternative sites if there have been significant ecological impacts. |

# **Appendix A: St Pius Child Safety Policy**

## Introduction

At ***St Pius X*** we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent in the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8589940582)).

The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: that is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9).

## Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of ***St Pius X*** to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school.It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in

[Ministerial Order No. 870](http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf).

This policy applies to school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

## Principles

Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8589940582)).

**The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at *St Pius X:***

All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.

Our school works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.

All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.

All adults in our school, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.

The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.

Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with the Church, governments, the police and human services agencies.

All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.

Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership.

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

## Definitions used in this Policy

**Child:** A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the school.

**Child abuse** includes:

(a) any act committed against a child involving:

* a sexual offence
* an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)

(b) the infliction, on a child, of:

* physical violence
* serious emotional or psychological harm

(c) serious neglect of a child. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf))

**Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf))

**Child neglect**: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. ([Safe Schools Hub](http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/resources-and-help/Glossary))

**Child physical abuse:** Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour. ([Safe Schools Hub](http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/resources-and-help/Glossary))

**Child protection:** Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm. ([Safe Schools Hub](http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/resources-and-help/Glossary))

**Child sexual abuse:** Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can also be:

* any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated
* any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion
* sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion
* non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse. ([Safe Schools Hub](http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/resources-and-help/Glossary))

**Mandatory Reporting:** The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners. ([Safe Schools Hub](http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/resources-and-help/Glossary))

**Reasonable Belief**: When staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a ‘reasonable belief’. A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

**School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

* a campus of the school
* online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
* other locations provided by the school for a child’s use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events). [(Ministerial Order No. 870)](http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf)

**School staff** means an individual working in a school environment who is**:**

* directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
* a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
* a minister of religion. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf))

## Policy Commitments

All students enrolled at ***St Pius X*** have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

**Our commitment to our students**

* We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school.
* We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
* We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
* We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
* We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
* We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

**Our commitment to parents and carers**

* We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
* We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.
* We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
* We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.
* We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

**Our commitment to our school staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy)**

* We commit to providing all *St Pius X* staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
* We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people’s protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.
* We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by *St Pius X* staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
* We commit to providing opportunities for *St Pius X* school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

## Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

Everyone employed or volunteering at ***St Pius X*** has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8589940582))

The school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows.

### 6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership

The principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at ***St Pius X*** recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety. Responsibilities include:

* creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
* upholding high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors
* promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
* ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
* ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters
* providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people’s protection and wellbeing
* ensuring the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf).

### 6.2 Guide to Responsibilities of School Staff

Responsibilities of school staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy) include:

* treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
* following the legislative and internal school processes in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
* providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
* undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
* assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
* following the school’s Child Safety Code of Conduct.

### 6.3 Organisational Arrangements

## Expectation of our School Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct

At ***St Pius X*** community, we expect school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the school. All school staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements. We have developed a Child Safety Code of Conductwhich recognises the critical role that school staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

Our Code also protects school staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

## Student Safety and Participation

At ***St Pius X***, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

## Reporting and Responding

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our school complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and the recommendations of the [*Betrayal of Trust*](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc/article/1788) report.

Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements.

Our school’s **Child Protection – Reporting Policy,** sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our school is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

* identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
* understand how a ‘reasonable belief’ is formed
* make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
* comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.

Our school has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student.

Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

* Grievance and Complaints Procedures
* Pastoral Care Policy

## Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

***St Pius X*** will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the school’s Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

* confirm the applicant’s Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
* obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
* verify the applicant’s history of work involving children
* obtain references that address the applicant’s suitability for the job and working with children.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

## Child Safety – Education and Training for School Staff

***St Pius X*** provides employees, volunteers and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

## Risk Management

At ***St Pius X***  we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

## Relevant Legislation

* Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)
* Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.)
* Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
* Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic.)
* Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
* Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) – Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act:

1. [**Failure to disclose offence**](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer%2Bcommunities/protecting%2Bchildren%2Band%2Bfamilies/failure%2Bto%2Bdisclose%2Boffence)**:** Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.
2. [**Failure to protect offence**](http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/http:/www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer%2Bcommunities/protecting%2Bchildren%2Band%2Bfamilies/failure%2Bto%2Bprotect%2Boffence)**:** The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
3. [**Grooming offence**](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer%2Bcommunities/protecting%2Bchildren%2Band%2Bfamilies/grooming%2Boffence)**:** This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

## Related Policies

14.1 Catholic Education Melbourne Policies

* [Policy 2.2: Guidelines Relating to the Employment of Staff](http://www.cem.edu.au/publications-policies/policy/policy-2.2-guidelines-employment-of-staff/) (currently under review)
* [Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](http://www.cem.edu.au/publications-policies/policy/policy-2.19-child-protection-repoting-obligations/)
* [Policy 2.19a: School Guidelines –Police and DHHS Interview Protocols](http://www.cem.edu.au/publications-policies/policy/policy-2.19a-police-and-dhhs-interview-protocols/)
* Policy 2.20: Misconduct Policy (withdrawn and currently under review)
* [Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students](http://www.cem.edu.au/publications-policies/policy/policy-2.26-pastoral-care-of-students-in-catholic-schools/) in Catholic Schools(currently under review)

14.2 School Policies

* Child Protection – Reporting Obligations
* Pastoral Care Policy
* ICT Policy
* Responsible Use of Social Media Policy
* Student Supervision Policy
* Volunteer’s Policy
* Grievance and Complaints Procedures

## Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, ***St Pius X*** may start the process under clause 13 of the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013*(VCEMEA) for managingemployment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the **principal** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the parish priest or the employer. Relevant notification should also be made to Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

Where any **other member of the school community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the school is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with: ***Child Protection – Reporting Obligations, Complaints Resolution Policy***and/or contact Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

## Review of this Child Safety Policy

At ***St Pius X*** we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

## References

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2016, [*Commitment Statement to Child Safety*](http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8589940208)*:* *A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic schools*.

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2013, [*Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013*](http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/vcsa/Agreement_2013/VCEMEA_2013.pdf), CECV.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, [*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html.)*,* Vatican.

Safe Schools Hub 2014, [*National Safe Schools Framework Glossary*](http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/resources-and-help/Glossary), Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

State of Victoria 2016, [*Child Safe Standards*](http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf) *– Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools: Ministerial Order No. 870*, Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Victorian Government Gazette No. S2.

Victorian Government Department of Justice 2016, [*Betrayal of Trust Implementation*](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/betrayal+of+trust+implementation).

# **Appendix B – St Pius X Code of Conduct**

## Rationale:

All staff employed by St Pius X governing body, Teachers, Staff, Parish Priest, Volunteers and Contractors, e.g. Parent and Community Volunteers, Cleaner, OSH Staff, Music Tuition and Outside Agencies have the responsibility to comply with the school’s code of conduct.

This code of conduct complies with VRQA Child Safe Standards and outlines St Pius X School commitment to a culture of child safety including all school environments and outside of school hours. Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse. School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by school governing authority including online school environments, (including email and intranet), camps, sporting events, excursions.

St Pius X Child Protection Policy outlines clear guidelines for the implementation of the Mandatory Reporting obligations and needs to be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct. The VIT code of conduct is included as reference for all teachers to fulfil their obligations for VIT registration.

## The employees of St Pius X School are expected to:

1. Display an exemplary Christian lifestyle.
2. Present a professional appearance at all times.
3. Perform to the best of their abilities their roles and responsibilities within the framework of law and through observance of lawful work instructions, within the limits of their authority and available resources.
4. Respect the uniqueness and dignity of individuals and act in a fair, courteous, sensitive and professional manner.
5. Explicitly teach, endorse and practice Well-Being programs and procedures, including online safety.
6. Accept the responsibilities arising from the trust placed in them by students, the community and work colleagues.
7. Perform their duties with integrity, honesty and impartiality.
8. Declare conflicts of interest which may result in personal or financial benefit.
9. Maintain appropriate confidentiality of personal and official information.
10. Be accountable for the efficient and effective use of resources with which they are provided.
11. Be committed to safeguarding and promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people – all staff and volunteers are to share this commitment.

1. Display an exemplary Christian lifestyle

* Follow Gospel values in all aspects of life.

2. Present a professional appearance at all times

* Dress appropriately being mindful of O H and S standards and requirements to meet expected work duties.

3. Perform to the best of their abilities their roles and responsibilities within the framework of law and through observance of lawful work instructions, within the limits of their authority and available resources

* Follow the policies and procedures of the School.
* Seek assistance, and if necessary, training or professional development in areas which are related with the conduct of duties.
* Operate within job descriptions where they exist and seek clarification where they do not.
* Report incidents of fraud, corruption or maladministration should they occur.
* Report incidents of child abuse.

4. Respect the uniqueness and dignity of individuals and act in a fair, courteous and sensitive manner

* Employees establish and cooperate to maintain a workplace that is free from discrimination, harassment or abuse of any kind. See Harassment and Discrimination Policy.
* Employees attempt to resolve conflicts or differences through appropriate resolution procedures. See Conflict Resolution procedures later in this document.

5. Explicitly teach, endorse and practice Wellbeing programs and procedures, including online safety

* Model andteach assertive statements
* Implement Restorative Practices
* Teach interpersonal and problem solving skills
* Conduct regular Social Circles to support students’ Wellbeing.
* Follow processes outlined in Anti-Bullying Policy (Students)
* Become familiar with and follow processes outlined in Anti-Bullying Policy
* (Staff)
* Become familiar with  and follow processes outlined in Supervision  of Students Policy
* Become familiar with and follow processes outlined in other Student Wellbeing policies outlined below
* Assist students to understand their responsibilities pertaining to Internet and network usage by explaining requirements for the eLearning Foundations agreement
* Teach school values to provide a safe eLearning environment by complying with   
  St Pius X eSmart policy. Refer to eSmart Policy for
* Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours
* Procedures for collecting and analysing incident reports, incidents of cyberbullying, etc.
* Ethical storage of data
* School education/integration into the curriculum – for teaching components for online safety
* Parent education
* Staff education
* System for students to report incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, cyber attack, etc.
* Comply with supportive policies for:
  + Teaching & Learning Policy
  + ICT Policy
  + iPad Policy & User Agreement
  + Student Wellbeing Policy
  + Privacy Policy
  + Social Media Policy
  + Student Internet and Email Agreement
  + Internet and Network User Agreement

6. Accept the responsibilities arising from the trust placed in them by students, the community and work colleagues

* Staff will often be in a position where students reveal information to them. Should the information contain indications of illegal activity such as child abuse or sexual abuse, then this information must be passed on to the Principal. Likewise, pastoral concerns may need to be passed on to people with greater experience. See Child Protection Policy.
* Staff are to recognise and accept the appropriate duty of care to protect their own health, safety and welfare and also the health, safety and welfare of others.

7. Perform their duties with integrity, honesty and impartiality

* Employees are to treat each person with fairness and ensure that fair decisions are made.
* Employees will follow correct procedures to resolve problems.
* As members of the community, employees have the right to make public comment, but in doing so, should not imply that their own private views represent the official view of the School.
* Where critical issues are at stake, refer questions to the appropriate spokesperson.
* Only the official spokesperson of the School may communicate with the media regarding incidents at the School.
* Where additional employment is undertaken, employees should seek the approval of the Principal of the School and make a commitment to ensure that the effective discharge of their duties is not affected.
* Employees express loyalty to the public, the School and to each other and avoid making comments or giving commitments that may bias their judgements or compromise the performance of their duties.

8. Declare conflicts of interest which may result in personal or financial benefit

* Where additional employment is undertaken, employees seek the approval of the Principal of the School and make a commitment to ensure that the effective discharge of their duties is not affected.
* Employees may not use School facilities and or equipment for their personal financial benefit.

9. Maintain appropriate confidentiality of personal and official information

* Where employees have access to the personal information of fellow employees, students and their families, they respect at all times the individual’s right to privacy and behave responsibly in maintaining the security of this information.
* Employees may only disclose the contents of any official papers or documents that have been supplied to, or seen by, them when this is required in the course of their official duties as an employee.

10. Be accountable for the efficient and effective use of resources with which they are provided

* Employees are accountable for the efficient and effective use of all physical, technical, financial and human resources.
* As custodians of these resources on behalf of the School community, employees have an obligation to use them prudently. As such they must allocate, manage and monitor these resources according to proper decision making processes and in compliance with relevant policies and procedures.

11. Use digital resources and the School’s Internet access appropriately

* You must not use the School Internet connection to access inappropriate or illegal content in any format, including, but not limited to, image, video or print format.
* All software on School computers must be licensed to the School.
* Copyright materials such as music or graphics are not to be stored on School computers unless appropriate licensing arrangements exist.
* School email addresses and ‘chat rooms’ are used for School business. ‘Hotmail’ or other free email services not to be used.
* Settings on computers should not be changed without reference to the system administrator.
* Avoid excessive downloads unless associated with teaching and learning.
* Use social networking sites such as Facebook appropriately at all times and in line with the spirit of this policy.
* Avoid revealing computer passwords to others.
* Be committed to safeguarding and promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people – all staff and volunteers are to share this commitment.

## The VIT Code of Conduct

The VIT Code of Conduct has been developed for and by the Victorian teaching profession. It identifies a set of principles, which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and the community. It is based on the values set out in the accompanying Code of Ethics, namely Integrity, Respect and Responsibility and draws on the Victorian Institute of Teaching’s Standards of Professional Practice, and Codes of Conduct for teachers developed by schools and other registration authorities.

### SECTION 1: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Teachers’ professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their students, their students’ parents (guardians and caregivers), families and communities and their colleagues.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

**1.1: TEACHERS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS TO LEARN**

The main focus of teaching is student learning. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to student learning by: knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities, maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment, accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching, having high expectations of every student, recognising and developing each student’s abilities, skills and talents, considering all viewpoints fairly, communicating well and appropriately with their students.

**1.2: TEACHERS TREAT THEIR STUDENTS WITH COURTESY AND DIGNITY**

Teachers: work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect, model and engage in respectful and impartial language, protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm, enhance student autonomy and sense of self-worth and encourage students to develop and reflect on their own values, respect a student’s privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate. That is: if the student has consented to the information being used in a certain way to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the student); as part of an investigation into unlawful activity if the disclosure is required or mandated by law to prevent a crime or enforce the law; refrain from discussing students’ personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially; use consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining students.

**1.3: TEACHERS WORK WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE**

In fulfilling their role, teachers carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support students by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise. Teachers: seek to ensure that they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities; are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies and when students should be referred to them for assistance; are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies.

**1.4: TEACHERS MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or a parent. They: interact with students without displaying bias or preference; make decisions in students’ best interests; do not draw students into their personal agendas; do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals.

**1.5: TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS IN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENTS IN THEIR SCHOOL, WHETHER AT SCHOOL OR NOT**

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students. The following examples outline some of those limits. A professional relationship will be violated if a teacher: has a sexual relationship with a student; uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with students; touches a student without a valid reason; holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines, without a valid context; accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from students or their parents. A professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher: attends parties or socialises with students, invites a student or students back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS, CAREGIVERS), FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

**1.6: TEACHERS MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS)**

Teachers should be respectful of and courteous to parents. Teachers: consider parents’ perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student; communicate and consult with parents in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner; take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns.

**1.7: TEACHERS WORK IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS’ FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Teachers recognise that their students come from a diverse range of cultural contexts and seek to work collaboratively with students’ families and communities within those contexts.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

**1.8: COLLEGIALITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORK OF TEACHERS**

Teachers demonstrate collegiality by: treating each other with courtesy and respect valuing the input of their colleagues, using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters, sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts, respecting different approaches to teaching, providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession, sharing information relating to the wellbeing of student

### SECTION 2:  PERSONAL CONDUCT

**2.1: THE PERSONAL CONDUCT OF A TEACHER WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF THAT TEACHER AND ON THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE**

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will:

a) be positive role models at school and in the community

b) respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations

c) not exploit their position for personal or financial gain

d) ensure that their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties

e) act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues.

### SECTION 3: PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

**3.1: TEACHERS VALUE THEIR PROFESSIONALISM, AND SET AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE**

Teachers:

1. are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
2. are committed to pursuing their own professional learning
3. complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way.

**3.2: TEACHERS ARE AWARE OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT PERTAIN TO THEIR PROFESSION.**

IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE COGNISANT OF THEIR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO: discrimination, harassment and vilification, negligence, mandatory reporting, privacy, occupational health and safety, teacher registration.

## THE VICTORIAN TEACHING PROFESSION CODE OF ETHICS

As teachers, we use our expert knowledge to provide experiences that inspire and facilitate student learning.

We are a significant force in developing a knowledgeable, creative, productive and democratic society. The values that underpin our profession are integrity, respect and responsibility. We hold a unique position of trust and influence, which we recognise in our relationships with students, parents (caregivers and guardians), colleagues and the community.

We demonstrate our integrity by: acting in the best interest of students, maintaining a professional relationship with students, parents, colleagues and the community, behaving in ways that respect and advance the profession.

We demonstrate our respect by: acting with care and compassion, treating students fairly and impartially, holding our colleagues in high regard, acknowledging parents as partners in the education of their children.

We demonstrate our responsibility by: providing quality teaching, maintaining and developing our professional practice, working cooperatively with colleagues in the best interest of our students. The purpose of this code is to: state the value that guides our practice and conduct, enable us as a profession to affirm our public accountability, promote public confidence in our profession.

The Code sets out the ideals to which we aspire.

The School **REVIEW:**

The School Advisory Board and staff regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct annually and revise the policy when required.

|  |
| --- |
| Updated: 2020 |
| Next Update: |

### Safeguarding Children and Young People

**Purpose**

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at **St Pius X** against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement other professional and/or occupational codes.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and board/school council members at **St Pius X** are expected to actively contribute to a school culture that respects the dignity of its members and affirms the Gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice. They are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

**Acceptable behaviours**

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and board/school council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by adhering to the St Pius X Code of Conduct Policy.

# **Appendix C - Designated Person Responsibilities**

Each staff member and parent helper has designated responsibilities so that the session runs smoothly. This table needs to be completed prior to each Bush School session.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Responsibility** | **Person/s Responsible** | **Date** |
| Leads the group to the site |  |  |
| Walks at the back of the group to keep the group together |  |  |
| Pushes the equipment trolley |  |  |
| Conducts Safety Sweep |  |  |
| Sets up Base Camp | and children |  |
| Reads children a welcome story |  |  |
| Models the session’s activities | and Bush School Leader |  |
| Supervises the four corners of the boundaries |  |  |
| Supervises the group in the event of a missing child | Bush School Leader |  |
| Searches for the child in the event of a missing child |  |  |
| Supervises toilet trips |  |  |
| First Aider |  |  |
| Provides guidance to the children if they require it |  |  |
| Packs up Base Camp | and children |  |
| Pushes the equipment trolley |  |  |

# **Appendix D: Safety Sweep Form**

\*Must be completed by Bush School staff at the beginning of each session.

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Checklist** | **Yes/No** | **Comments** |
| Snake check |  |  |
| Fallen branches |  |  |
| Loose branches above |  |  |
| Insects (ants, wasps, bees, spiders) |  |  |
| Wildlife |  |  |
| Slippery surfaces |  |  |
| Broken glass, rubbish, needles, dog faeces |  |  |
| Water (puddles, creek, lake, beach) |  |  |
| Boundaries |  |  |
| Base camp area |  |  |
| Tool area (locked away) |  |  |
| First Aid kit |  |  |
| Extra water |  |  |
| Sun conditions/shelter |  |  |
| Intruders |  |  |
| Other (please specify) |  |  |

# **Appendix E: Risk Benefit Assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk** | **Risk Benefit** | **Likelihood** | **Severity** | **Who?** | **Management** |
| Coronavirus transmission | Social and nature connection hugely beneficial for mental wellbeing. | Low | High | Everyone | * Sessions are in open, fresh air where adult participants can maintain social distancing (1.5m) * Sanitiser available throughout session as required and participants will be asked to sanitise hands prior to eating. * Food should not be shared between participants. |
| Trips and falls (while walking to site, while learning on site) | Balance, proprioception, gross motor skills, exercise, strength, stamina, testing personal limits, outdoor experiences, fresh air | High | Low | Everyone | * Adults will empower children to observe their surroundings for trip hazards. * All participants to wear appropriate footwear (see Clothing Policy). * Children will be under adult supervision at all times. * Adults will carry First Aid equipment to treat minor injuries resulting from falls. |
| Sunburn | Vitamin D, outdoor exposure, fresh air | Medium | Medium | Everyone | * All participants in bush school to follow the SunSmart policy and Clothing Policy. * The facilitator will carry a spare pump pack sunscreen for children to apply themselves. * On days of extreme heat, bush school will not run (see Heat Policy). |
| Dehydration | Vitamin D, outdoor exposure, fresh air | Low | High | Everyone | * All participants in bush school to follow the SunSmart policy. * Participants must bring their own water bottles. * Bush school facilitator will carry extra water. * On days of extreme heat, Bush School will not run (see Heat Policy). |
| Heat stroke | Vitamin D, outdoor exposure, fresh air | Low | High | Everyone | * All participants in bush playgroup to follow the SunSmart policy. * The facilitator will carry spare sunscreen. * Children will be advised to have a drink before leaving for the session and will carry water bottles. * The faciliator will carry extra drinking water. * On days of extreme heat, bush school will not run (see Heat Policy). |
| Tree climbing | Balance, proprioception, gross motor skills, problem solving, communication, responsible risk-taking, a feeling of safety and security, a good view, challenge, fitness, strength, fun | Medium | High | Children | * Children will be encouraged to assess particular trees for safety. Are there enough branches? Is the tree strong enough? What is their plan for climbing it and getting down? * Leaders to communicate with children to help them assess their ability and confidence. * Children will be encouraged to take small, achievable steps, such as swinging from one branch first or climbing a smaller tree. * Children will be instructed about the “three points of contact” guideline. * Adults to supervise high risk activities at all times |
| Falling/dead branches | Habitats, building materials, balance, tree study, nature study, seasonal study, problem solving, resilience | Low | High | Everyone | * Monitor weather conditions, particularly wind. Bush School will not run if the BOM issues strong wind warnings for the area, or if the facilitator judges that the wind is hazardously strong. * Fallen branches to be checked for snakes as part of the safety sweep. * Discuss with children what to do if you flip over a log and find a spider (stand back, stay still and quiet and observe). * Discuss with children about poking sticks into logs and whether this is safe. * Select appropriate site to avoid trees with dead branches. * Communicate with council for any safety concerns – ph: 94904222 |
| Insect bites | Identification of local fauna and their habits, Aboriginal cultural knowledge, respect for animals, confidence about how to coexist with wildlife, outdoor exposure, problem solving | Medium | Medium | Everyone | * Any known anaphylactic children will have their epipens and treatment plans with them at the session. * Children to wear appropriate protective clothing (see clothing policy). * Facilitator to communicate with children about how to observe insects safely and how to assess the risk of a bite or sting. * Flora and fauna identification sheets, and reference books, to be provided to all students as a resource to help them identify potentially biting or stinging species. * First Aid kit will contain equipment for minor bites and stings, including tweezers, alcohol wipes, soothing cream and Band-Aids. |
| Snake bites | Identification of local fauna and their habits, Aboriginal cultural knowledge, respect for animals, confidence about how to coexist with wildlife, problem solving | Low | High | Everyone | * All Bush School staff to be familiar with the Snake Bite Policy (see page 13). * Staff to conduct a “snake stamp” as part of the safety sweep before each session. * Facilitator should lead the group and check for snakes when walking * Flora and fauna identification sheets, and reference books, to be provided to all students as a resource to help them identify any local venomous snake species. * Educate children and parents on snake safety each session * Keep clear of longer grass and be aware around waterways. * Children to wear closed toe shoes during bush school. * Stocked first aid kit and adequate first aid training. * Exercise particular caution and practise what to do if you see a snake regularly during Term 1 and Term 4 (snake season). |
| Swooping birds (magpies, wattlebirds, noisy mynas, etc) | Identification of local fauna and their habits, Aboriginal cultural knowledge, respect for animals, confidence about how to coexist with wildlife, problem solving | Low | Medium | Everyone | * Teachers and children will observe the site for birds throughout the year that may swoop during breeding season. * Children will be taught about why and when birds swoop. Children will be encouraged to treat birds with kindness and respect in non-swooping season, which has been shown to decrease swooping behaviour. * Flora and fauna identification sheets, and reference books, to be provided to all students as a resource to help them identify any swooping bird species. * Bush School site may be moved to a different part of the park if birds are swooping in a specific area. |
| Poisonous plants | Plant identification, Aboriginal cultural knowledge, confidence, connection to nature and edible plants | Low | High | Children | * All children to be told the “No pick, no lick” rule. * Flora and fauna identification sheets, and reference books, to be provided to all students as a resource to help them identify potentially toxic plant species. * Aboriginal community leaders to be consulted about endemic plants on the site and their properties. |
| Open water | Diversity of bird life, scientific opportunities such as testing water quality, a calming and aesthetically pleasing effect on children, opportunities to discuss water safety | Low | High | Children | * Site boundaries exclude open water * Water activities will be fully supervised by adults * Ratio of 1:2 adults:children around water * Bush School staff to communicate with children about water safety and assessing risks for themselves – testing the depth of the water first with a stick, being aware of slippery surfaces around water etc. |
| Litter | Discussions about pollution prevention and sustainable choices, student agency | Low | Medium | Children | * Adults to conduct a safety sweep before each session to remove any hazardous litter. * Bush School Leader to provide flags for students to flag any non-hazardous litter they might find. * Children to be advised to bring Nude Food to Bush School sessions to reduce the likelihood of litter. * Bush School Leader to bring hand sanitiser to each session in case of contact with litter. * Contact council for any significant litter removal |
| Peelers (tools) | Mindfulness, fine motor skills, respectful and safe use of tools, creativity, learning to make functional objects | Medium | Medium | Everyone | * Bush group facilitator or parent to work 1:2 when teaching whittling. * Children to be carefully instructed about how to hold and use a peeler safely: sitting down with legs apart and elbows on knees, and pointing the knife away from their body with a glove on the non-cutting hand. * Facilitator to carry peelers in a zipped pocket when not in use on site. * Peelers to be stored in a **locked box** when not in use. * Only to be introduced once facilitator judges children to be ready. |
| Hammers (tools) | Mindfulness, fine motor skills, respectful and safe use of tools, creativity, learning to make functional objects | Medium | Medium | Everyone | * Bush group facilitator or parent to work 1:2 when teaching hammering * Children to wear a glove on their non-hammering hand when holding the nail. * Children need to be aware of others around them and ensure they maintain a “blood bubble.”(at least half a metre on each side) * Children to be carefully instructed about keeping the hammer well below eye height and hammering in a seated position. * Only to be introduced once facilitator judges children to be ready. |
| Public Park/Stranger interference | Exposure of the public to nature education and play.  Awareness of the importance of playgroups in the community | High | Medium | Children | * Boundary is set up and children should stay within boundary. If children need to leave boundary for toileting requirements, they need to be with a adult. * Signs should be posted on the bike track to inform the public that the session is in progress. * Paths should be made available so that the public can easily avoid the playgroup. * Strangers should be directed to the bush school facilitator if they have questions. |
| Creek/Drowning | Education about water safety.  Sensory experiences, balance, proprioception, problem solving skills. | Low | High | Children | * Facilitator to check water quality and level prior to start of session. * Children should be with an adult at all times when participating in creek activities. * The creek will be outside the playgroup boundary and only used for specific activities or challenges. * Facilitator to be first aid trained and should carry first aid kits. |
| Bikes/Motorbikes | Education about active travel (bikes) and learn about how to stay safe around vehicles. | Low | High | Children | * Children to wear hi-visibility vests * Boundary to exclude bike path and walking tracks where bikes would usually go. * Warning signs posted on bike paths * Children instructed on road/bike safety and told to stand still when they see a motorbike |
| Lost child | Using public spaces and bushland areas – wellbeing, environmental education, learning opportunities that you don’t have in the classroom | Low | High | Children | * Attendance taken at the beginning and end of each session * Boundaries established with ropes and cones and children advised to stay within sight of the group. * Teachers/volunteers to strategically spread out around site to maintain visual contact of children at all times. Adults supervise site boundaries * Children to wear hi-visibility vests * Adult at the front and back of group when walking * In case of missing child, see “Missing child policy” |
| Dog bite | Public spaces expose members of public to outdoor learning experiences | Medium | Medium | All | * Boundary established with ropes or cones and signs placed on bike track to inform dog owners of session. * Children educated about dog safety (stand still, arms down, don’t approach, pat or feed unknown dogs). |
| Road safety – walking to and from the site | Education about road safety. Learning about local community. | Low | High | All | * Children to walk in pairs as a single group on footpath * Adults to walk at front, back and spread evenly throughout group * Crossing routines to be practised before starting in a familiar environment (stop, look left, look right, look left before crossing). * Bunch up as a group at each intersection before crossing so it can be done quickly and efficiently. * At Oriel Rd, one adult to stand in the middle traffic island, halting traffic if need be. Alternatively split group into two smaller groups with an adult at the front and back to cross more quickly. |
| Toileting | Self-care | Low | Low | Everyone | * Everyone to go to the toilet before and after the session * Camp toilet and tent provided or children may do a bush wee behind a sheet * Children to go to the toilet with an adult supervising. * Dignity of participants to be maintained at all times. |
| Injury /illness | Self-care and education about responding to emergencies | Low | High | Everyone | * Facilitators trained in first aid and will administer in the first instance * There will be a staff member with a car available to transport a child to school or hospital if necessary. * Teachers to carry phones to call emergency services and/or parents and/or school. |