



Snake Policy

Purpose

Dartmoor Primary School (f-6) is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for students, staff and volunteers. This policy aims to clearly define the risk of snakes at the School, procedures for preventing snake bite, the appropriate medical response to snake bites, and a framework for the appropriate education and training of students, staff, parents/guardians and visitors on minimising the risk of snake bite.

Scope

This policy applies to students, parents/guardians, staff, contractors, volunteers and visitors to Dartmoor Primary School.

Key Responsibilities

Position/Roles	Responsibilities
School Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and Endorse policy
Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and Maintain safe and healthy environment for students, staff and volunteers. Develop and implementation of DPS policy and procedures Provide resources and support for staff in undertaking their responsibility in this area
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of the Snake Policy and Procedures Educate students, parents, contractors and visitors on minimising the risk of snake bite Taking reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others affected by their work or actions; and Reporting hazards and accidents/incidents in accordance with the DPS OHS procedures.
All Students, Parents, and Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of the Snake Policy and Procedures and follow instructions from Staff. Taking reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others affected by their actions.

Key Elements of the Policy

Dartmoor Primary School is located in a bush setting in which it is known that snakes inhabit. Several species of snake have been observed over the past 20 years. They are most prevalent in the warmer months (September to April) but could be encountered on a sunny

day at any time of the year. Unprovoked, snakes rarely attack humans and are generally shy, timid animals that will avoid conflict if given the opportunity. It is recommended that particular care be taken in warm weather, near long grass or hollow logs, near water or near rocks in sunny positions. Snakes are protected under the Wildlife Act 1975, and should not be harmed or killed. Bites can occur if people try to kill snakes.

Implementation of Policy

DPS is responsible for:

- supplying a First Aid Kit to administer first aid in response to snake bites or for any other purpose which includes pressure immobilisation bandages (also known as compression bandages) for medical treatment of snake bites;
- ensuring first aid staff are appropriately educated on procedures to prevent snakebite and to deliver First Aid in response to a Snake Bite (see below);
- ensuring a sufficient number of staff hold Level 2 First Aid;
- Following all procedures as set out in the DPS OHS Policy Incident Reporting and Investigation Form. including notice of notifiable incidents, appropriate record keeping in the event of an incident, maintain first aid kit etc.);
- encouraging parents, through this policy, to teach students snake bite prevention behaviours outside of DPS.

Staff are responsible for:

- continually practising and educating students on snake bite prevention behaviours while at DPS, without fostering an unnatural fear or paranoia of snakes. This includes practising and highlighting to students the following key points:

Snake Bite Prevention Behaviours

(Source: Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health)

- Leave snakes alone
- Wear adequate clothing and stout shoes (not sandals/thongs) in 'snake country'
- Never put hands in hollow logs, holes or thick grass without prior inspection
- When stepping over logs, carefully inspect the ground on the other side\
- ensure students are reminded on a regular basis that if they encounter a snake, to move away quietly and report the sighting immediately to a teacher;
- calmly moving students away from the snake in the event that a snake is encountered at school [Staff must not attempt to touch or harm the snake];
- administering first aid in the event of a snake bite as follows:

First aid for snakebite

(Source: Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health, and Australian Venom Research Institute, Melbourne University)

- Stay calm and call or send someone to the Office for help. Phone for an ambulance.
- Reassure the patient and encourage them to remain calm and still. Do not move the patient.
- Do not attempt to catch or kill the snake.
- DO NOT WASH the bite. Traces of venom that are left on the skin can be used to identify the snake, and therefore the type of antivenom that should be used if required.
- Venom is injected deeply so there is no benefit in cutting or sucking the bite. A tourniquet is not an effective way to restrict venom movement.
- The most effective first aid for snakebite is the pressure-immobilisation technique. Refer to Snake Bite Fact Sheet - St John's Ambulance for instructions on the application of this technique. The principle is to minimise the movement of the venom around the body until the victim is in a hospital by applying a firm bandage (or suitable alternative) to the bitten area and limb, and to immobilise the victim. When applied properly, this method can trap the venom in the bitten area for many hours. The victim might not suffer any effects of the venom until the compression is released, which is done in hospital where antivenom can be administered if required.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- teaching their children snakebite preventative behaviours outside of school, for example, on family walks in the bush;
- reading and being familiar with the policy;
- bringing relevant issues to the attention of leadership.

Communication of Policy

This policy will be communicated in the following way:

- To staff via first aid training and on the DPS website
- To parents via the DPS website and DPS newsletter.

Definitions

Australian Venom Research Unit: An internationally recognised interdisciplinary research unit focused on the problem of venomous injury in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. Located within Melbourne University, the Australian Venom Research Unit aims to provide world-class expertise on the problem of Australia's venomous creatures, their toxins and the care of the envenomed patient. Pressure Immobilisation Bandage (also known as Compression Bandage): Bandage used for the purpose of applying pressure to the site of a wound such as snakebite and to the affected limb. Refer definition below of Pressure Immobilisation Bandaging.

Pressure Immobilisation Bandaging: The principle of pressure-immobilisation bandaging as a first aid measure is to prevent the spread of toxins through the body. This is done by

applying enough pressure to compress the lymph vessels, and by preventing movement of the affected limb. Correct application of the technique can buy valuable time to get the patient to medical assistance. [[Refer to Snake Bite Fact Sheet - St John's Ambulance](#) for correct application of pressure immobilisation technique]

Victorian Poisons Information Centre (VPIC): Phone 13 11 26 (24 hours a day, seven days a week) Located at the Austin Hospital, the role of the VPIC is to provide the people of Victoria with a timely, safe information service in poisonings and suspected poisonings. For members of the public this includes telephone assessment, advice on first aid, with or without referral to a doctor or hospital. Information is given to health professionals about formulations of products and management of poisoned patients.

References

[Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Codes, First Aid in the Workplace \(2008\)](#)

[Wildlife Act 1975](#)

[Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 \(National Law\)](#)

[Victorian Poisons Information Centre \(VPIC\)](#)

[Snake Bite Fact Sheet - St John's Ambulance](#)

[What snake is that?](#)

Review

This policy was last updated on 20th October 2023 and will be reviewed every four years.

Appendix One

- Map of the school with indications of snake sightings

Appendix Two

- Snake Procedure

Appendix One:

Snake sighting locations



What do I do?

1. Ensure the safety of other staff and students by removing them from the area.
2. Monitor the snake from a safe distance if possible
3. Send someone to notify the office the location of the snake.
4. Leadership will determine if a snake catcher is needed.
5. A sign is placed up in the area indicating that a snake has been sighted here today.
6. Notify teachers by placing a notice on the uEducateUs news feed.