

Purpose

Padbury Catholic primary School 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

These guidelines apply to students, parents/guardians, staff, contractors, volunteers and visitors to PCPS.

Key Responsibilities

Position/Roles	Responsibilities
Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and Maintain safe and healthy environment for students, staff and volunteers.• Develop and implementation of PCPS 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 PCPS 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 Guidelines

Padbury Catholic Primary School is located near a bush reserve setting in which it is known that snakes inhabit. Several species of snake have been observed over the 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, 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 Guidelines PCPS 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 Senior First Aid;
- Following all procedures as set out in the PCPS OHS Policy Incident Reporting procedure 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 PCPS.

Staff are responsible for:

- continually practising and educating students on snake bite prevention behaviours while at PCPS, 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)

- 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 staff member;
- 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 and Australian Venom Research Institute)

- 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 guidelines;

Communication of Policy

This policy will be communicated in the following way:

- To staff via first aid training and on the PCPS website
- To parents via the PCPS website and PCPS 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]

<https://www.scgh.health.wa.gov.au/Our-Services/Service-directory/Poisons> : Phone 13 11 26 (24 hours a day, seven days a week) Located Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital 4th floor; the Poisons Centre is to provide the people of WA 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

[WildlfConsvnAct1950_09-d0-00.docx \(legislation.wa.gov.au\)](#)
<https://www.scgh.health.wa.gov.au/Our-Services/Service-directory/Poisons>

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

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

Review

This Guidelines was last updated on February 2022 and will be reviewed every two years.

Appendix Two

Snake Procedure 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 Team will determine if a snake catcher is needed.
5. Notify teachers by placing a notice on the SEQTA daybook or email.