

Policy Name	Child Protection Policy
Constructed by	Corporate Services Manager
Reviewed and Approved by	Executive
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Introduction

Yarra Valley Grammar (**the School**) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. The School has no tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at the School is responsible for the care and protection of children and for reporting information about child abuse.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000 and ask to speak to the Police.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- (a) detail the actions the School takes to ensure a child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the School;

- (b) establish controls and procedures to prevent child abuse occurring within all School environments;
- (c) promote an organisational culture of child safety and provide a clear statement forbidding child abuse or harm;
- (d) ensure all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse;
- (e) establish controls and procedures for preventing child abuse or harm, and detecting it when it occurs in the School environment;
- (f) provide guidance regarding action that should be taken should abuse be suspected within or outside of the School, or following a disclosure of abuse from a child;
- (g) ensure everyone knows their responsibilities to prevent and report child abuse; and
- (h) provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Definitions

"Child" is defined as a person under the age of 18 years, or as according to the applicable legislation.

"CSOs" means Child Safety Officers.

"Mandatory reporter" means the Principal, registered teachers, registered nurses, registered psychologists, youth, social or welfare workers, early childhood teachers, and persons in religious ministry.

"School" means Yarra Valley Grammar.

"School environment" means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the School's Board for use by a child, including:

- (a) a campus of the School;
- (b) online or virtual School environments (including email, intranet systems, software applications and online services); and
- (c) other locations provided by the School for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, homestay accommodation, delivery of education by a registered training organisation, TAFE or non-school senior secondary provider, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

"Staff" means the School's Principal, teaching staff, employees, volunteers, contractors, Board members, and students on placement.

Recognising child abuse

Child abuse means conduct towards, against, with or in the presence of a child, or threatening to engage in such conduct, which includes all forms of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect. The School also considers exposure to family violence to be a type of child abuse, as well as forced marriage and grooming. Specific examples of child abuse include:

Physical abuse: Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental physical injury, injury or violence which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child or young person;

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others (this includes grooming behaviour);

Emotional and psychological abuse: Emotional and psychological abuse is when a child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;

Serious neglect: Neglect is an omission, where the child or young person suffers serious harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, shelter, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

Scope

This policy applies to all students (over the age of 18 years), employees, volunteers, contractors, and Board members of the School, whether or not they work face-to-face, online or remotely with children. This includes all Staff.

Other School community members, who are involved in child-connected work, and are associated with the School, are also obliged to comply with this policy. For example, this may include homestay families and designated caregivers.

This policy applies to allegations, disclosures, suspicions and risks of child abuse, as well as to actual child abuse. In particular, it applies to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, visitor or other person while connected to the School environment.

Guiding principles

This policy is based on the following guiding principles:

- (i) the School has no tolerance for child abuse;
- (ii) the best interests of the child are paramount;
- (iii) child protection is a shared responsibility of everyone in the School community;
- (iv) all children have a right to feel safe and be safe at school, and have equal rights to protection from abuse and neglect;
- (v) the School will consider the opinions of students and use their opinions to develop child protection policies and procedures;
- (vi) the School is committed to providing a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued;
- (vii) the School is committed to understanding children and young people's diverse circumstances and providing support and responding to those who are vulnerable, including children with a disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children;
- (viii) the School will take into account the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) by paying particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children who are vulnerable, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these matters;
- (ix) everyone covered by this policy must also comply with the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets stringent standards for personal behaviour; and
- (x) all children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Board

The **Board** of the School has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and complying with the National Child Safe Principles, the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359 (Appendix A).

The Board's responsibilities include:

- (a) ensuring appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place, including processes to respond to complaints, concerns, disclosures, with regular reviews. This includes reviewing the Child Safety Risk Register to identify causes and systemic failures and make recommendations regarding continuous improvement;
- (b) implementing policies, procedures and codes of conduct to ensure Staff know how to protect and prevent child abuse, and report it when it occurs or is suspected; and
- (c) championing and modelling a culture of child safety as leaders in the School.

Responsibilities of the Principal

The **Principal** of the School is responsible for:

- (i) appointing an investigator to investigate reports of child abuse and ensuring that the investigation is carried out in accordance with legislative requirements;
- (j) ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- (k) ensuring that all adults within the School community are aware of their obligation to report suspected child abuse or risk of abuse in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- (l) ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct and Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- (m) ensuring the Principal's obligations under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (i.e. the reportable conduct scheme) are satisfied, and that the Social Services Regulator is notified in the manner (and time periods) required;
- (n) monitoring the overall compliance of the School when there is a complaint or concern relating to child abuse that needs to be acted on and reported to authorities; and
- (o) providing support, information and training for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

Responsibilities of the Heads of School, Managers and Senior Staff

All **Heads of School, Managers and Senior Staff** must ensure they:

- (a) promote child safety at all times, and model a child safe culture to others;
- (b) assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- (c) educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- (d) facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Management should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

Responsibilities of All Staff

All **Staff** are responsible for:

- (a) implementing this Policy to prevent and detect child abuse;
- (b) promoting child safety at all times and providing a safe School environment for children;
- (c) telephoning 000 if they believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse;
- (d) reading and complying with this Policy, Reporting Procedure and the Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- (e) responding to a child disclosing an incident of child abuse or harm (or a risk of child abuse or harm), in a child-focused manner, with sensitivity and professionalism;
- (f) reporting any concerns about actual or suspected child abuse or harm, or any breach or suspected breach of this Policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct, as soon as possible to a CSO or manager;
- (g) creating incident reports about suspicions, incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse or harm;
- (h) upholding equity, respecting diversity and not tolerating any instances of racism within the School Environment;
- (i) recognising the importance of friendships and encourage peer support between students;
- (j) facilitating child-friendly ways for children to express their views, for example, by including children in decisions that affect their safety.

Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, must disclose that information to the Police or the DFFH. If a person would like internal guidance or support with addressing their concerns, they are encouraged to speak with a CSO at the School. This helps the School to meet its obligations to protect children from potential abuse to the greatest extent possible.

Responsibilities of Child Safety Officers

Nominated and trained Child Safety Officers (**CSOs**) are available to listen, discuss and clarify issues confronting individuals in relation to child abuse and risk of child abuse and harm. CSOs will make reports on behalf of the School and ensure adequate records are maintained, including by helping Staff to make records according to the Reporting Procedure and Records Management Policy. CSOs at the School are the Student Wellbeing staff at Junior and Secondary School levels and the School Chaplain.

CSOs' responsibilities include:

- (a) championing child safety within their area of the School and supervision, and modelling a child safe culture to others;
- (b) overseeing investigations of complaints and disclosures as directed by the Principal;
- (c) reporting any risks to child safety to the Principal;
- (d) maintaining adequate records of all complaints, disclosures, decisions and actions taken in relation to a child safety complaint or disclosure;
- (e) providing support for children at risk or where an allegation, complaint or disclosure has been made; and
- (f) supporting others in the community to maintain a child safe School environment, including helping Staff apply the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

Risk management and prevention

Risks to child safety can include:

- (a) poor organisational child safety culture, such as a culture of silence or strict hierarchies;
- (b) inadequate supervision of children;
- (c) inappropriate staff appointments;
- (d) activities conducted in an unfamiliar environment;
- (e) online environment;
- (f) images or videos being taken of children; and
- (g) overnight stays such as School camps.

To mitigate and prevent these risks, the School:

- (a) requires Staff to comply with School Policies, as listed above;
- (b) annually reviews risks, and monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the implementation of the risk controls (The Board, and Risk and Governance Committee);
- (c) makes child safety a part of its overall risk management strategy approach; and
- (d) ensures that, at least annually, staff receive appropriate guidance and training according to this Policy;
- (e) reviews child safety policies, procedures and practices after any significant child safety incident, or at least every two years.

Governance

Child safety is a standing item at Board meetings to ensure the Board regularly considers risks to children in the School environment, and implements strategies to ensure child safety in all School environments.

Risk assessments for child safety consider specific activities by the School, and the characteristics of children expected to be present in that environment. Risks are entered into the Child Safety Risk Register.

The Board reviews the Child Safety Risk Register to identify causes and systemic failures and make recommendations regarding continuous improvement.

Recruitment

The School undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all employees, volunteers and contractors which aims to:

- (a) promote and protect the safety of all children within the School environment;
- (b) identify and recruit the safest and most suitable candidates who share the School's values and commitment to protect children; and

- (c) prevent a person from working at the School if they pose a risk of harm to children.

All successful applicants employed or engaged by the School will be assessed for their suitability to work with children on an ongoing basis, including:

- (a) during any scheduled performance review; and
 - (b) after any concern is raised regarding their conduct with children,
- to ensure that they remain suitable for child-connected work.

Working with Children Checks

The School has a Working with Children Checks Policy and all staff must comply with this Policy.

Training

Staff must attend annual training. Training covers:

- (a) this Child Protection Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- (b) procedures to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse and child harm (i.e., the Reporting Procedure)
- (c) recognising indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and students, in particular as identified in the School's Child Safety Risk Register;
- (d) how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities, and how to effectively respond to those issues;
- (e) how to respond to disclosures from staff and students;
- (f) responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm;
- (g) how to build culturally safe environments for children and students; and
- (h) information sharing and recordkeeping obligations.

Training to all staff includes:

- a) Annual online induction including child safety training (completed by new staff upon start)
- b) Child Safety Mandatory Reporting online module (MARAM), completed annually
- c) Annual face-to-face child safety presentation by the School Child Safety Officers
- d) Annual child safety presentation by external party (ad-hoc)

The School provides volunteers training and information appropriate to the nature of their role, guiding them on identifying and managing child safety risks without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. At the very least, this includes this Policy and Reporting Procedure and the Child Safety Code of Conduct as well as annual online induction including child safety which contains support for colleagues who disclose harm when responding to issues of child safety and wellbeing.

Homestay families attend annual induction which includes child safety training.

Board members must attend annual training. This training covers:

- a) individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse;
- b) child safety and wellbeing risk in the school environment; and
- c) child safety policies, procedures and practices of the School.

Training records are recorded as per below:

- d) Completed online training, including Protecting Children Mandatory Reporting certificates, is recorded in the School online platform, Rapid Induct.
- e) Face to face training is recorded in hard copy attendance lists or Google forms.

Proactive child safety and wellbeing measures

Communication

The School is pro-active in the area of prevention and communicates and disseminates the Child Protection Policy and Procedure, Child Safety Code of Conduct and Child Safety Risk Register in the manner below.

STUDENTS	PARENTS, GUARDIANS, COMMUNITY	EMPLOYEES, BOARD MEMBERS	VOLUNTEERS, CONTRACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • School assemblies • School Health and Wellbeing curriculum • School programs (internal and external) • Information to Senior School students prior to turning 18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and Friends Group • Conditions of enrolment • Website • Parent information evenings • School newsletter • Invitations for feedback on child safety • Reporting to community on outcomes of child safety reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Letters of appointment/contracts • New employees, and board members Induction Training and refresher training • Annual Training Session • Annual Induction • Performance Development and Coaching sessions (as applicable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Contracts • Application forms • Annual Induction

The School will ensure its Child Protection Policy and Procedure, Child Safety Code of Conduct and Child Risk Register are communicated in training sessions as described in the Training section of this policy, and are easy to understand, particularly for:

- younger students, by discussing the documents in-person in training sessions and school programs (and by any other method deemed appropriate and effective for the particular age of the student); and
- students living with a disability, by discussing the documents in-person (and by any other method deemed appropriate and effective for the particular type of disability that the student is living with);
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, e.g. international students, by discussing the documents in-person, with the aid of a translator if required; and
- families and community members, including homestay families, so these procedures are easy to understand.

Empowerment

The School have an Empowerment and Participation Statement that is written in age-appropriate language to give students information about their rights, including their right to safety.

The School strives to create an environment where students are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. This is reflected in the Reporting Procedure.

Participation of families

The School supports Staff to ensure families participate in decisions related to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child by:

- (a) hosting parent-teacher interviews regularly;
- (b) establishing student support groups and consulting with families regarding behaviour support plans or safety plans; and
- (c) consulting with families regarding any reasonable adjustments that may be required for their child.

Diversity and equity

The School pays particular attention to the needs of children and students:

- (a) who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
- (b) with disabilities;
- (c) from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- (d) are unable to live at home (international students, family violence, out of home care, youth justice, homeless);
- (e) are gender or sexually diverse (LGBTIQ+); and/or
- (f) are otherwise vulnerable.

The School's Diversity and Inclusion Policy includes strategies to School implements to:

- (a) establish culturally safe environments in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children are respected and valued; and
- (b) ensure the School provides support and responds to vulnerable children and students.

The School's Empowerment and Participation Policy is written in age-appropriate language to ensure students have access to information and support that is accessible and easy to understand.

Responding & Reporting to complaints and concerns

When the School suspects that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, the School will respond to that suspicion in an appropriate manner which prioritises the safety of children and young people, taking into account the diverse characteristics of the children and young people involved.

In the case of an allegation being made against an employee, contractor, volunteer or Board member at the School, the Child Safety Officer will follow the Child Protection Reporting Procedure in consultation with the Principal or delegate. The School will take all steps to ensure the safety of the child is paramount.

The Principal is responsible for monitoring the overall compliance of the School when there is a complaint or concern relating to child abuse that needs to be acted on and reported to authorities.

All Staff are required to follow the Child Protection Reporting Procedure (at the end of this policy).

Reporting obligations

The Child Protection Reporting Procedure (at the end of this Policy) sets out the actions the School and Staff will take to inform appropriate authorities of allegations of suspected child abuse. This Procedure includes:

- (a) Mandatory Reporting obligations that apply to Mandatory Reporters, such as the Principal and registered teachers;
- (b) Authorities that may need to be contacted about allegations of child abuse; and
- (c) Other reports that may be made, such as under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Investigations

The Principal or delegate will appoint an independent investigator to investigate the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations conducted by DFFH, the police or the Social Services

Regulator, and will co-operate with the authorities as required. All staff must co-operate fully with any investigation by DFFH, the police, the Social Services Regulator or the School.

The Principal will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other employees, volunteers, contractors or Board members (if applicable) may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements).

Investigations will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness.

Making a complaint

Anyone can make an anonymous complaint by referring to the YVG Whistleblower Policy.

In addition, anyone can make a child safety complaint or disclosure to any member of YVG Staff who will report that complaint as required by our processes and by law. This will involve telling a Child Safety Officer and the Principal, and may include reporting to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and/or Victoria Police and/or the Social Services Regulator for Children and Young People.

All complaints are taken seriously and handled in a child-focused manner.

Refer to the YVG Complaints Handling Policy for further information.

Recordkeeping and Privacy

When the School identifies a risk of child abuse in a School Environment, the risk and the actions taken (or that will be taken) to reduce or remove the risk must be recorded in the Child Safety Risk Register.

Staff must:

- (a) create an Incident Report;
- (b) comply with the Records Management Policy;
- (c) create and maintain records of all complaints, concerns, safety incidents, risks, disclosures, decisions and of all actions taken in relation to a child safety complaint or disclosure;
- (d) respect individuals' privacy;
- (e) limit sharing or disclosing information about child abuse and harm when it is not necessary to comply with reporting obligations, this Policy or Procedure, or support the child or student; and
- (f) refer to the School's Records Management Policy and/or Privacy Policy for further guidance.

Records must be factual and not conjectural or interpretative. Places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm must be recorded. Staff must provide these records to the Child Safety Officers as soon as possible so the Child Safety Risk Register can be maintained.

Records about child safety, including the Child Safety Risk Register must be securely stored to protect the privacy of individuals concerned. For example, Staff should not discuss child abuse concerns in a staff meeting (whether online or in person) when many people are present. Instead, Staff should arrange a private time and space to talk to a CSO or the Principal.

Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to privacy.

Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, employees, volunteers, contractors and Board members must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality or the School's Privacy Policy, other than to report and act consistent with the Child Protection Policy and Procedures, and relevant statutory requirements.

Breaches

Staff must report any breach or suspected breach of this Policy, the Child Protection Reporting Procedure and the Child Safety Code of Conduct to a CSO or the Principal as soon as possible after becoming aware of it.

If the School becomes aware of a breach or suspected breach, it will take immediate steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of any child who may be at risk of child abuse or harm. A breach of this Policy may result in disciplinary action (including termination of engagement with the School).

Suspected breaches will be investigated in accordance with the Policy and any relevant legislation (for example, the Reportable Conduct Scheme), and in a manner that provides procedural fairness, while considering child safety as paramount.

Monitoring and review

The School welcomes feedback from all members of the community. A review of this Policy, and the Reporting Procedure and Child Safety Code of Conduct, is conducted every two years and/or after any significant child safety incident.

The School conducts consultation on this Policy after a significant child safety incident to work collaboratively with our community for the safety of children.

Amendments:

- July 2021
- August 2022

References and related policies

YVG Staff Code of Conduct
YVG Child Safety Code of Conduct
YVG Privacy Policy
YVG Records Management Policy
YVG Empowerment and Participation Policy
YVG Diversity and Equality Policy
YVG Social Media Policy
YVG Bullying and Violence Policy
Ministerial Order 1359 and the Victorian Child Safe standards

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- the law of the Commonwealth or of Victoria; and
- the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

CHILD PROTECTION REPORTING PROCEDURE

This Reporting Procedure applies to all students, employees, volunteers, contractors, and Board members of the School, whether they work face-to-face, online or remotely with children. It should be read in accordance with the Child Protection Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in this child protection reporting procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at this of child abuse.

The School will protect a student connected to a complaint or concern relating to child abuse or harm until the complaint or concern is resolved.

Step 1: Immediate danger

Any staff member who receives a disclosure, suspects or witnesses abuse, or is concerned for the safety of a child or student will stay with the child or student (if within their presence) and take all reasonable steps to ensure the child's immediate safety.

If the staff member believes the child is at immediate risk of abuse or harm, they must notify Victoria Police immediately by telephoning 000.

The Principal is responsible for monitoring the overall compliance of the School when there is a complaint or concern relating to child abuse that needs to be acted on and reported to authorities.

The School will remove and protect the child from any circumstances that could lead to further harm and offer additional support.

Responding to a disclosure

In the event of a child or young person disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust it is essential that the disclosure is dealt with sensitively and professionally. To support and assist children who disclose child abuse, or are linked to suspected child abuse, staff should follow the HEARTS steps:

H – Hear. Actively listen to the child making the disclosure. Believe the person's experience. Do not interrupt.

E – Empathy. Respond to the disclosure with empathy. Validate the person's experience.

A – Affirm. Affirm that the alleged abuse is not the child's fault and that they have done the right thing by telling someone.

R – Record. Record the disclosure, focusing on using the child's own words, and recording observational facts.

T – Tell. Tell someone, such as a Child Safety Officer.

S – Self-care. Remember to check in with yourself after a disclosure and seek support if you need it.

Staff who receive a disclosure must take the child seriously and needs to be sensitive to the child's specific circumstances and the diversity characteristics of the School community. For example, Staff should consider the age and maturity of the child, the cultural background of the child, children with existing physical or emotional needs, LGBTI+ children or other children who may be vulnerable. Support for these children may be tailored appropriately and in consideration of specific needs that arise as a result of the disclosure.



Step 2: Is there an obligation to report?

Internally: All Staff members **are strongly encouraged** to discuss any concerns, suspicions, allegations or disclosures of child abuse or harm with a CSO. As per the Child Protection Policy, Staff must complete an Incident Report. A CSO can help staff members follow this procedure. However, staff members are NOT required to consult with the School prior to making a report. Staff can also refer to the Whistleblower Policy for anonymous reports.

Mandatory reporters (including teachers, psychologists, Principal): Staff members who, in the course of carrying out their duties, form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because they have suffered or are likely to suffer from significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents cannot or will not protect the child **must** disclose that information to the police to DFFH if they are a **mandatory reporter**.

Criminal obligations: Any adult who forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a **sexual offence** has been committed in Victoria against a child under the age of 16, by an adult, **must** make a report to police as soon as practicable. This is a criminal offence to not report. A sexual offence includes rape, indecent assault, grooming, sexual penetration of a child (under the age of 16), threat to commit a sexual offence, causing a child to be present during a sexual activity and attempting a sexual offence against a child.

Any adult who is in a position of authority or control (such as a supervisory role) and who is aware of a substantial risk that a child will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the School (such as a Staff member or volunteer) must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk. It is a criminal offence to negligently fail to reduce or remove this risk. Reporting to DFFH or police is one way to reduce or remove the risk.

Reports **must** be made **each time** a person becomes aware of further ground for their belief a child may have suffered or is likely to suffer harm.

Obligation to report: Anyone who, in the course of carrying out their duties, form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because they have suffered or are likely to suffer from significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents cannot or will not protect the child, **must** disclose that information to the police or DFFH.

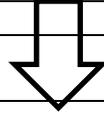
Staff members who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection from child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or neglect, **must report** to DFFH or police.

Reportable conduct scheme: The School must report any reportable allegation made against a Staff member to the Social Services Regulator within 3 business days of becoming aware if the allegations. Staff members are strongly encouraged to advise a CSO if they become aware of conduct that may constitute a reportable allegation, which includes conduct that occurs outside someone's employment.

A **reportable allegation** arises when a Staff member forms a reasonable belief that there has been:

- (a) a sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;

- (b) behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child;
- (c) significant neglect of a child; or
- (d) misconduct involving any of the above.



Step 3: How to Make the report

Ring DFFH at the East Division on 1300 360 391. Ask for Child Protection.	Ring the police on 000.	Ring the Social Services Regulator (SSR) on 1300 310 778 or email the Regulator at contact@ssr.vic.gov.au .
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It is recommended to contact other organisations:

- For international students, contact VRQA.
- For Staff conduct concerns, contact Victorian Institute of Teachers.
- DFFH’s Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Team is known as Child FIRST.

Information for Making a Report:

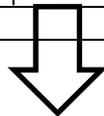
- Name, age and address of student
- The reason for suspecting that the behaviour or injury is a result of abuse
- An assessment of the immediate danger to the student
- A description of the injury or behaviour observed
- The current whereabouts of the student
- Any other information about the family
- Any specific cultural details, e.g. English speaking, disability, etc.

Ask that the School be informed of each step of the procedure.

Request that if an interview is to take place at the School, the visiting police officer/Social Services Regulator representative is in plain clothes and the time of the interview is specified so that appropriate arrangements for a meeting room can be organised.

If the student is agreeable to be interviewed by DFFH, Social Services Regulator and/or the police, the Child Safety Officer / Head of Student Wellbeing should offer to be present at the interview to give support to the student.

Following a report, DFFH, the police and/or Social Services Regulator may need to contact the Principal about the notification. It would be a matter of courtesy to inform the Principal that a report has been made, or is about to be made. This is not required.



Step 4: Internal action for the School

When a CSO becomes aware of a report, a Case Management Group (consisting of the Child Safety Officers, the Head of Student Wellbeing and / or the Principal or delegate) will be set up to discuss the matter and to offer support to the student and reporter.

Care for the student:

After any immediate risk of harm has been removed or mitigated (see Step 1), the CSO, or others in the Case Management Group, will provide additional support for the child(ren) concerned. This may be in the form of: referral to a wellbeing professional or external support services, developing a student support plan, engaging in regular communication and follow up, supporting the student to be around their friends in the School environment.

Recordkeeping

Staff must create an Incident Report to record of the risk to child safety, instance of child abuse or harm, complaint, concern, allegation or disclosure, and steps taken to mitigate the risk of further harm.

CSOs are responsible for ensuring recordkeeping is appropriate, and that the incident is recording in the Child Safety Risk Register. Refer to the Child Protection Policy and Records Management Policy for further information about recordkeeping requirements.

Employment and staff matters:

Where the School receives allegations or concerns that any staff member may have engaged in conduct that could give rise to a risk of harm to a child, the School will:

- (a) Stand the staff member down while an investigation is conducted;
- (b) Remove or limit their contact with children;
- (c) Direct the Staff member to return any keys, passes or equipment and to provide access codes and passwords.

Investigations

The Principal (or Chair of the Board if the allegation involves the Principal) will conduct an independent investigation, in accordance with the Child Protection Policy, into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by DFFH, the police and the Social Services Regulator, and will co-operate with the authorities as required. If the allegation is considered a reportable allegation, the Principal will notify the Social Services Regulator of who is going to conduct the investigation.

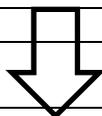
If the DFFH, the Social Services Regulator or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all students, employees, contractors, volunteers and Board members must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Principal or delegate will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Principal or delegate will decide to conduct such an investigation. All students, employees, contractors, volunteers and Board members must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of procedural fairness.

The Principal or delegate will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Principal or delegate shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and/or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

Step 5: Privacy and information sharing

Following a report, it is important to protect privacy and confidentiality, and the interests of the child at all times.

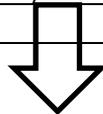
- The family will not be contacted if this is considered to be a risk to the child;
- Where it is considered to be in the best interests of the child, the School will seek to involve the student and family;
- The identity of the person making a notification will be kept confidential (except when that information is required in a court case) unless that person gives permission for the information to be divulged. Such confidentiality should also be requested by the Child Safety Officer / Head of Student Wellbeing and any other person who may become aware that a notification is to be, or has been, given;
- Throughout the entire process of observation, discussion and reporting, the interests of the student and their family will be protected from unnecessary disclosure of information concerning abuse;
- The School will protect a student connected to a complaint or concern related to abuse or harm until the complaint or concern is resolved.
- Following the making of a report, any investigation that takes place by that external authority (i.e., DFFH, the police or the Social Services Regulator) is the responsibility of that authority.

Information sharing schemes

The School is an Information Sharing Entity (**ISE**) under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and Child Information Sharing Scheme (**Schemes**). This means the School can share information with, or request information from over ISEs for the purpose of protecting children or addressing family violence.

These Schemes:

- recognise that safety is the primary consideration; and
- require consultation with individuals whose information may be shared (to respect privacy), unless this may increase the risk of harm to any individual.



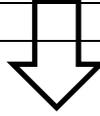
Step 6: Reportable Conduct Scheme

Within 30 calendar days after becoming aware of any reportable allegation/s, the Principal will provide the Social Services Regulator with:

- Detailed information about the reportable allegation;
- Information about proposed disciplinary or other action to be taken in response to the allegation; and
- Any written submissions made by the employee, volunteer, contractor or Board member about that disciplinary or other action.

After the independent investigation has concluded, the Principal will provide the Social Services Regulator with:

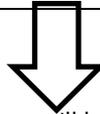
- A copy of the investigation findings and reasons; and
- Additional information about proposed disciplinary or other action to be taken in response to the allegation.



Step 7: Protection of reporters

Any employee, volunteer, contractor, or Board member that makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations will be supported by the School, and will not be penalised by the School for making the report.

If an employee, volunteer, contractor, or Board member is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they can speak to a CSO for guidance and information.



Step 8: Evaluation

The School Board will be notified and policies and procedures will be reviewed if this is considered a significant child safety incident.

APPENDIX A: Victorian Child Safe Standards (MO 1359)

Standard 1

Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

Standard 2

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

Standard 3

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Standard 4

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Standard 5

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Standard 6

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Standard 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.

Standard 8

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

Standard 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

Standard 10

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

Standard 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.