



CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

1. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 1: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Fintona Girls' School is committed to creating a culture of child safety to lower or eliminate as much as possible risk of harm to children and young people. The School has established robust expectations of behaviour for all adults involved with students at the School. We have appointed Child Safety Officers, and both Board and staff will be given regular professional development in the area of the seven Child Safety Standards.

The Board is responsible for a Risk Management Register and a Risk Assessment Matrix which will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis. Fintona Girls' School also has robust recruitment and employment practices set out in the Recruitment and Selection Policy. We hope that by building a strong culture of child safety we will reduce the ability for potential abusers to be opportunistic.

2. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2: COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

See the School's [Child Safety Policy and Procedures](#).

3. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 3: CODE OF CONDUCT

All staff, volunteers and Board members of Fintona Girls' School are required to observe the child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of Fintona Girls' School are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- Adhering to Fintona Girls' School Child Safe policy at all times and upholding Fintona Girls' School statement of commitment to child safety at all times (Child Safe Standard 1).
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Treating everyone with respect.
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples child's self-identification).
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination, running annual safety briefings.)
- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities).
- Ensuring as far as practicable that an adult is not left alone with a child.
- Reporting and documenting any allegations of child abuse to one of the School's Child Safety Officers or the Principal and ensuring any allegation is reported to the police or the Child Protection Authority.
- Reporting and documenting any child safety concern to one of the School's Child Safety Officers.
- If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.

- Encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children.)
- Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometime, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area).
- Put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors).
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities).
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children.
- Discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, gender, ethnicity or disability.
- Have contact with a child or their family outside of our School without a Child Safety Officer's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting or tutoring). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate.
- Have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example, in the explicit context of school related work.)
- Ensuring appropriate behaviour, dress and manner when working with students in a remote learning setting online
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

4. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 4: HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES

Fintona believes staff members are the backbone of a successful education and a first class school and seeks to attract and retain staff of the highest calibre who will not only be outstanding classroom practitioners but excellent role models.

Fintona staff will be encouraged to be progressive educators and leaders who will contribute to a vibrant, creative and continual educational dialogue.

Ten common recruitment mistakes Fintona will avoid are:

- Not creating an accurate job description
- Failing to consider recruitment from within
- Relying too much on an interview
- Using unconscious bias
- Hiring people less qualified than 'you'
- Rejecting an overqualified candidate
- Waiting for the perfect candidate
- Rushing the hire
- Relying too much on references
- Expecting too much, too soon from a new recruit

The central aspect of recruitment and employment at Fintona is making sure the candidate is a good fit in terms of their disposition and attitude as well as having relevant experience, qualifications and credentials.

The recruitment process contains a number of steps:

- Identifying a need within the School based on retirement, resignation or changing student or school requirements.
- Drawing up the parameters of the position and updating Position Descriptions as required.
- Ensuring that details of position requirements, qualifications, skills, other attributes etc. are included in an advertisement, including references to being a Child Safe School, access to Position Descriptions, etc.
- Creating an advertisement and placing it in The Age; ISV website and the Fintona website, as required, including a timeline for accepting applications.
- Advertisements that appear on our website and that of ISV must contain references to Fintona's commitment to child safety, refer to our Code of Conduct and Child Safe Policy and a reference to rigorous background checks.
- Ensuring that the Position Description is up to date and included on the School's website.
- The Principal will accept all applications which will be kept in a folder by the Principal's EA who will acknowledge each by email or letter.
- The Principal will select a panel of relevant staff to interview prospective candidates. This should consist of at least two (2), ideally three (3), staff members including the Principal, or her delegate from the Executive team.
- The selection panel will review all applications and make a decision regarding a short list which is usually between three (3) to five (5) people.
- The Principal's EA will organise interviews at a mutually convenient time.
- Interviews will be conducted using an agreed set of questions.
- Once the interview process is completed, the panel will discuss their preferred candidates and agree on a final selection. There is not usually a second round of interviews unless the panel reach an impasse or it is a senior position which requires further discussion.
- The Principal or her delegate from the Leadership team (who was on the interview panel), will conduct background and referee checks using the School's Referee Checklist.
- A contract will be drawn up and sent to the successful candidate including a letter of offer, terms and conditions of employment etc.
- Once the signed contract is returned, with all the accompanying documentation as requested, the Principal or her delegate from the Leadership team (who was on the interview panel) will ring unsuccessful candidates who were short listed and the Principal's EA will write to all other unsuccessful candidates.
- If unsuccessful candidates want feedback, the Principal or her delegate from the Leadership team (who was on the interview panel) will provide verbal only feedback.

4.1 INTERVIEW PROCESS

The interview process will be conducted in a friendly and welcoming way which allows a candidate to respond well in the interview.

Candidates will be asked questions from a prepared set of questions which include questions about practice and experience and also more general questions about their attitudes, interests, etc. They will also be given the opportunity to ask the panel questions.

As part of the Child Safe requirements, candidates will also be required to answer questions about their behaviour with children, motivation for seeking employment amongst children and also some questions around their employment history and attitudes.

4.2 THE CONTRACT

A Fintona contract will contain the following details:

- A letter of offer;
- Employment entitlements;
- Position details;
- Position Description;
- Remuneration;
- General employment requirements;
- Confirmation of the right to work in Australia;
- Statutory Declaration;
- Work Information Statement; and
- Child Safe Code of Conduct.

4.3 QUALIFICATIONS AND CHECKS

Successful candidates will also be required to demonstrate that they do not have any sort of criminal record. This will include a national police check, and identity check if required.

Employees will be required to submit copies of all relevant qualifications.

All staff are given a six-month probation period to assess new staff members' performance and suitability for the position before confirmation of permanent employment.

4.4 INDUCTION PROCESS

Once a staff member is employed by the School, it is important that prior to their arrival, there are processes in place to help them to make a smooth transition. This may include, but is not limited to, contact from a faculty co-ordinator, senior staff member or Head of School who has responsibility for the area of employment who may invite the person in to meet other staff, discuss areas of responsibility, offer a school tour, etc.

The formal induction will occur prior to the staff day(s) at the beginning of the school year or if the staff member is starting outside of that period, it may be conducted slightly differently but should include the following;

- Staff Handbook
- School keys
- Laptop computer, associated hardware and password
- A bag containing starting equipment: white board markers, a School Diary, pens, etc.
- Key policies and associated documents
- Discussion regarding the School including Fintona's ethos, protocols, processes and expectations
- A School tour
- A mentor assigned to the new staff member, who is not their line manager
- A member of the Leadership team also has overall responsibility for new staff, and will conduct regular meetings with new staff in the first six months of their employment which coincides

with the probationary period. Notes are to be retained for all meetings, with copies given to the Principal.

There are a number of policies that pertain to staff at Fintona that will be referred to from time to time and staff should be familiar with their contents as they are regularly reviewed and amended in response to VRQA and State and Federal government regulations and compliance rules. Also, Fintona itself often initiates its own changes as a response to parental, staff or student concerns. These will be documented, updated and shared as appropriate.

Teaching staff should also be familiar with the VIT Code of Conduct that they agree to when they are registered.

5. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 5: RESPONDING AND REPORTING

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously that it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, the police or other authority.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with a [Child Safe Incident Report Form](#) to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Principal or one of the School's Child Safety Officers.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely with the Principal.
- The Child Safety Officer will follow Mandatory Reporting guidelines and their legal obligations.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused or raises a concern of suspected abuse:

- Explain that Fintona has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Principal or a Child Safety Officer at the School, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with a [Child Safe Incident Report Form](#) to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and if you are not a Child Safety Officer, then let them know that you will be passing on this information for follow up as per the School's mandatory reporting and legal obligations.
- The record should be stored with the Principal.

5.1 COMPLETING AN INCIDENT REPORT

Any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused needs to be documented using the [Child Safe Incident Report Form](#) in conjunction with reading the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#)

When completing an Child Safe Incident Report aim to obtain as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any reports and may be referenced later if the matter is the subject to court proceedings. Once Part A of the [Child Safe Incident Report Form](#) is complete, it is to be forwarded to one of the School's Child Safety Officers. Completing the Child Safe Incident Report Form should not impact on reporting times.

Note: It is a legal requirement under Ministerial Order No. 870 (Child Safe Standards) for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

5.2 FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SOMEONE IS DISCLOSING INFORMATION

Cultural diversity

Be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers when reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking about such matters and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. Be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member or a local community support group).

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student, ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students, or a local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander leader.

Students with a disability

Some students with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, students with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on communicating with those with a disability can be found on the Department of Family Fairness and Housing website.

5.3 LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Whilst there is a need to gather information to make a report, it is not the role of School staff to investigate abuse - leave this to Victoria Police and/or DFFH Child Protection.

Remember - forwarding any concerns does not divulge School staff members of their legal responsibilities. Refer to the School's Mandatory Reporting Policy for more information.

Every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused or has substantial evidence that a child may be at risk of abuse, whether in their school or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The failure to disclose criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child

under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

The failure to protect criminal offence applies 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 of responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

More information about failure to disclose and failure to protect is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website.

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities. Refer to the School's Mandatory Reporting Policy or the DFFH website for mandatory reporting advice.

6. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 6: RISK MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION

The following strategy is a formal and structured approach used by Fintona Girls' School to manage the risks associated with child safety. It includes references to what the risks could be, how they are managed, who is responsible for the process (the School Board) and a description of the process itself. The process includes risk assessment, implementation of controls and a monitoring and review process to ensure currency of the risk management approach.

The Fintona Girls' School Board of Management uses a risk register and risk rating matrix to manage risks to the School. The register and matrix are referred to in this policy as The Fintona Girls' School Risk Register and the Risk Rating Matrix, respectively.

Areas of risk are potentially any contact between adults (staff and volunteers) or older and younger students. These risks could be predatory risks i.e. a person or persons' skill at creating opportunities to sexually abuse and avoid detection; opportunistic risks i.e. person or persons who may sexually abuse in low-risk, low-effort situations; environmental risks i.e. environments that create child safety risks. By developing strategies around Human Resource Practices, a culture of Child Safety, a Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct as well as reducing or removing risks, Fintona' believes it has a structured identification and reduction approach to Child Safety. This includes appointing Child Safety Officers, training the Board and the staff and monitoring and reviewing all practices and policies around Child Safety.

Fintona has a range of policies, procedures and expectations to assist in the mitigation of risk around child safety, which include the School's physical environment, online environment, off campus environments related to School activities, external providers, recruitment practices, visitors to the School, photography and videography, parents, staff and students.

The Fintona Girls' School Board of Management has a Risk Register and Risk Rating Matrix that set out the following:

- documented risks relevant to the Child Safety Standards;
- consideration of the diversity of students at Fintona Girls' School and the School's response in relation to diversity needs;
- lists mitigating actions that decrease the likelihood of abuse and increase the likelihood of detection; and

- actions that reduce the opportunities for inappropriate and/or abusive behaviour.

Fintona Girls' School ensures that personnel associated with the School understand our expectations related to the Child Safety standards and our general expectations regarding student welfare.

As part of our risk management strategy and practices, the School Board monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its Risk Register and Risk Rating Matrix on a six-monthly basis through:

- monitoring its child safety risk management strategies to ensure they are implemented; and
- reviewing their strategies to ensure their effectiveness.
- Once a year the School's Board of Management will ensure that training is provided to members of the Board and the staff regarding:
 - individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
 - child abuse risks in the school environment; and
 - the School's current Child Safety Standards.

7. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 7: EMPOWERING CHILDREN

Fintona Girls' School, as part of its commitment to Child Safe Strategies, believes that children should be empowered and that their voices should be heard and their rights promoted. By feeling safe and empowered, children and young people will feel confident enough to report their concerns regarding their safety and welfare and they will be taken seriously. Fintona believes that as well as feeling comfortable to raise concerns, the School needs to enable children and young people to know how to raise those concerns, with whom and to feel safe in doing so. Fintona works to ensure that their approach is accessible to all its students.

Parents and families also need to know that Fintona is a Child Safe school where they can raise concerns, where they will be listened to, taken seriously and, if needed, acted upon. Our policies and procedures will be accessible on the School's website, intranet and will be referred to from time to time in School literature including the News Bulletin.

Students will also be reminded on a regular basis of such policies, procedures and strategies by Heads of School and/or the School Counsellor and encouraged to voice any concerns with a trusted adult.

Fintona Girls' School will continue to review and develop policies and procedures with the safety and welfare of students at the forefront of their considerations. Additionally, the School believes that by establishing a positive, inclusive culture which embraces individual difference but maintains an awareness of the expectations of any community's rights and responsibilities, that our students will be empowered to feel they are considered and listened to in all our deliberations.

8. REFERENCE POINTS / BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Victorian Justice Department – Protecting Children and Families
<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families>
- Department of Family Fairness and Housing Services – Child Protection Manual
<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting>
- Making a Report to Child Protection
<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection>
- Four Critical Actions for Schools
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

- Child Safety Policy and Procedure
- Child Safe Incident Report Form
- Child Safety Officer Role Description
- Code of Conduct – Staff
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy

AGREEMENT

I have read and agree to observe the Child Safe Standards and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

I understand my obligations and agree to immediately report any breach of the Child Safe Standards to one of the School's Child Safety Officers or the Principal.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



CHILD SAFE INCIDENT REPORT FORM

PLEASE NOTE: If you are making a report to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police you must seek their advice before contacting parents/carers so as not to compromise any investigation or place a child at further risk.

The School needs to report the allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) within three (3) business days after becoming aware of the allegation.

PART A *(To be completed by the first point of contact member of staff, parent, student or member of the community)*

PERSON REPORTING THE ALLEGATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> parent <input type="checkbox"/> student <input type="checkbox"/> member of staff <input type="checkbox"/> volunteer/contractor <input type="checkbox"/> alumni <input type="checkbox"/> member of public	

If anyone is immediate danger, contact Victoria Policy on 000

CRITICAL ACTION 1 – RESPONDING *(Refer to Action 1 - Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse. See Attachment 1)*

PERSONAL DETAILS OF CHILD	
Full Name:	Gender:
Year Level / Class:	Date of Birth:
Residential Address:	
Parent/Carer Name/s:	Parent/Carer Contact:
Language(s) spoken by child:	Disabilities, Mental or Physical Health Issues:
Is an interpreter required?	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES, if YES, state language:

NOTE: If you require an interpreter to help you to get more information please call the interpreter service on 131 450. Tell the operator which language you need and the phone number of the person you want to contact. The operator will get an interpreter on the line to assist you with your conversation. You will not be charged for this service.

GROUNDS FOR YOUR BELIEF THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN, OR IS AT RISK OF ABUSE
<i>(Detail any disclosures or incidents or suspicions (including names, times and dates documenting a child's exact words as far as possible). Include specific detail here on what led you to form a reasonable belief that a child has been or is at risk of being abused.)</i>
Any physical indicators of abuse:
Any behavioural indicators of abuse:
Any patterns of behaviour or prior concerns leading up to an incident, disclosure or suspicion:

DETAILS OF PERSONS ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTED THE ABUSE (IF KNOWN):		
Title:	First name:	Family name:
Gender:	Date of Birth:	Relationship to Child (if any):
Address:		
Telephone:		Mobile:
Email:		

RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY
Did the child require first aid? If yes, provide details:
Who administered this?: <i>(name and title)</i>
Did the child require further immediate medical assistance? If yes, provide details:
Current location and safety status: <i>(Eg. Are all impacted students safe and not in any immediate danger?)</i> If a child is in immediate danger school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police on 000

CHILD'S BACKGROUND
Cultural status and religious background:
Known previous history or suspected abuse: <i>(prior to this incident, disclosure or suspicion or involvement with agencies)</i>

FAMILY BACKGROUND
Family composition (if known): <i>(listing parenting or care arrangements and sibling's names and ages)</i>
Any other people living with the child (if known):
Disability, mental or physical health issues in family (if known):
Likely reaction to a report being made (if known):

STAFF MEMBER LEADING THE RESPONSE (CHILD SAFETY OFFICER)		
Title:	First name:	Family name:
Position:		
School Address: 79 Balwyn Road, Balwyn, VIC, 3103		Telephone: (03) 9830 1388 (business hours)

PART B (To be completed by Child Safety Officer or School Principal)

CRITICAL ACTION 2 – REPORTING (Refer to Action 2 - Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse. See Attachment 1)

REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES
<p>This has been reported to: <i>(please tick)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Victoria Police <input type="checkbox"/> DFFH Child Protection <input type="checkbox"/> Child FIRST <input type="checkbox"/> CCYP (Commission for Children & Young People)</p> <p>(Or)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Decision not to proceed</p>
<p>If you decide not to report, list your reasons here. Also, include any follow up actions undertaken by you below: <i>(Please note that the School has a legal obligation to report all allegations to CCYP within three (3) business days of becoming aware of the allegation.)</i></p>
<p>Outcomes from the report/details of any conversations with authorities:</p>

REPORTING INTERNALLY <i>(if you are not a Child Safety Officer)</i>	
Name(s) of people you spoke with:	
Time:	Date:
Provide details of your discussion with one of the Child Safety Officers or School Principal:	

CRITICAL ACTION 3 – CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS (Refer to Action 3 - Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse. See Attachment 1)

ACTIONS TAKEN <i>(Child Safety Officer/Principal)</i>	
Provide details of your discussion with parents/carers (if appropriate): <i>(School Principal must consult with Victoria Police and/or DFFH Child Protection to determine if it is appropriate to contact parents. If it is, parents must be contacted as soon as possible (preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)).</i>	
Have you sought advice from DFFH child protection or Victoria Police? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Is it appropriate to contact parent/carer? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
If NO list reason(s) to not contact parent/carer:	
If contacting parent/carer, name of staff member making the call:	
If contacting parent/carer, name of parent/carer receiving the call:	

Discussion outcomes:

CRITICAL ACTION 4 – PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT (Refer to Action 4 - Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse. See Attachment 1)

PLANNING ACTIONS (*Child Safety Officer/Principal*)

Include detail on what follow up actions have occurred to support the student: (*for example, referral to wellbeing professionals and other specialised services, the convening of a student support group and development of support plans*)

Follow up actions:

Support:

Referral(s):

ATTACHMENT 1 FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SHCOOLS DOCUMENT

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a critical role in protection children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the 4 critical actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse)
- You **must** use the *Responding to Suspected Child Abuse* template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to Action 2

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q. Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police.

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

You **must** also report internally to Child Safety Officers and/or Headmaster.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYPP)

Within 3 business days of becoming aware of the allegation, the Headmaster must report the allegation to CYPP on <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/>

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must** also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.

You **must** also report internally to Child Safety Officers and/or Headmaster.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYPP)

Within 3 business days of becoming aware of the allegation, the Headmaster must report the allegation to CYPP

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

The Headmaster must consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- not to contact the parents/ carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- to contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

4 PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION	DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT
North Division 1300 664 9777	(03) 9589 6266
South Division 1300 655 795	
East Division 1300 360 391	STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT
West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599	(03) 9637 2595
West Division (Metro) 1300 664 9777	DIOCESAN OFFICE
AFTER HOURS	Melbourne (03) 9267 0228
After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78	Ballarat (03) 5337 7135
	Sale (03) 5622 6600
CHILD FIRST	Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377
www.dhs.vic.gov.au	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
VICTORIA POLICE	(03) 9825 7200
000 or your local police station	COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYPP) https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/
	1300 78 29 78

* A reasonable belief is a deliberate low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

Source: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf