

# CULTURE of STUDENT SAFETY

## CHILD SAFE – STANDARD 1

### **Purpose**

To ensure that Ballarat Specialist School demonstrates a full commitment to child safety through embedding and supporting an organisational culture through effective leadership arrangements.

### **Objective**

To provide a framework and explanation to the Ballarat Specialist School parents/carers, staff and students the processes and procedures in place to fulfil our commitment to child safety.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff, contractors and volunteers
- all children and members of the Ballarat Specialist School community.

### **Rationale**

Everyone in society has a moral responsibility to keep children safe and to protect them from harm. A proactive culture that develops and maintains student safety through effective leadership and organisational structures promotes the importance of child safety and affirms the organisation's commitment to keeping children free from harm.

### **Implementation:**

All staff employed or volunteering at Ballarat Specialist School have a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play as an individual and as a member of the school team to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all thinking, actions and decisions.

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

### **Guide to Leadership Staff Responsibilities**

The Principal, School Council, VRQA and School Leaders at Ballarat Specialist School recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness and shared responsibility for child safety.

Responsibilities include:

- upholding high principles and standards for all staff, volunteers, and contractors
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child protection and wellbeing

- ensuring the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).

### **Guide to School Staff Responsibilities**

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

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

### **Guide to Welfare Teams Responsibilities**

Responsibilities of school Welfare Team members include:

- taking a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety by closely monitoring students, particularly those at risk
  - fostering a culture of openness that supports all persons, including school staff, parents and children to safely disclose risks of harm to children
  - respecting diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
  - providing written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
  - engaging only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
  - ensuring children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
  - reporting suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
  - valuing the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers, as appropriate
  - supporting and assist children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse
- offering programs that support the building of strategies around resilience, management of conflict, positive mental health, mindfulness etc. to support students' willingness to discuss and resolve child safety matters.
- engaging in an annual review the schools Child Safe Standards by utilising the Action Plan Template (see appendix 1).

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

### **Links and Related Policies**

The following are links to support material:

- Ballarat Specialist School Child Safe Statement of Commitment
- Ballarat Specialist School Child Safe Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Ballarat Specialist School Child Safe HR Practices
- Ballarat Specialist School Child Safe Responding and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse
- Ballarat Specialist School Child Safe Risk Management
- Ballarat Specialist School Child Safe Child Empowerment

## CHILD SAFE STANDARD 1: ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Action Plan Lead name:

Action Plan review date:

Child Safe Standard	Does your school meet the Standard? YES/NO	What action(s) does the school need to take to better meet the Standards?	Responsibility (Who)	Responsibility (When)
1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, through effective leadership arrangements				
2. A Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety				
3. A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children				
4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel				

5. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse				
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse				
7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children				

# STATEMENT of COMMITMENT

## CHILD SAFE – STANDARD 2

### Purpose

To ensure that Ballarat Specialist School demonstrates a full commitment to child safety.

### Objective

To explain to Ballarat Specialist School parents/carers, staff and students the processes and procedures in place to fulfil our commitment to child safety.

### Scope

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff, contractors and volunteers
- all children and members of the Ballarat Specialist School community.

### Rationale

Everyone in society has a moral responsibility to keep children safe and to protect them from harm. A Statement of Commitment to child safety helps raise awareness about the importance of child safety in school and the community and affirms the organisation's commitment to child safety and expectations.

### Statement

Ballarat Specialist School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

**Ballarat Specialist School has zero tolerance for child abuse.**

Ballarat Specialist School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of young children and those with a disability.

Every person involved in Ballarat Specialist School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

### Implementation:

The school's plan for creating a Child Safe culture will be communicated to the community on our website along with appropriate School policies. Information about Child Safety will also be published in the school's newsletter, displayed around the school on noticeboards and distributed at parent information sessions.

The Wellbeing Team of Ballarat Specialist School will ensure the following actions are undertaken, we will:

1. take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety by closely monitoring students, particularly those at risk
2. value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives through access to internal and external expertise in a regulated manner
3. foster a culture of openness that supports all persons, including school staff, parents and children to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount

5. provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
6. engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
7. ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
8. report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
9. share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
10. value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers, as appropriate
11. support and assist children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse
12. offer programs that support the building of strategies around resilience, management of conflict, positive mental health, mindfulness etc. to support students' willingness to discuss and resolve child safety matters.

In response to the Betrayal of Trust report the Victorian Government has strengthened laws to protect our children from sexual abuse and exposure to sexual offenders. This is in recognition of the shared community responsibility to protect children from abuse and to provide a safe environment for children to develop, learn and play.

A new criminal offence for failing to protect a child under the age of 16 from a risk of sexual abuse commenced on 1 July 2015.

The 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 or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

This offence encourages organisations to actively manage the risks of sexual offences being committed against children in their care to protect them from harm.

**Evaluation:**

This statement of commitment will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

**Links and Related Policies:**

The following are links to support material:

- [Failure to Disclose Offence](#)

This statement was endorsed by School Council in....

# CODE OF CONDUCT

## CHILD SAFE – STANDARD 3

### **Purpose**

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur.

### **Objective**

To assist Ballarat Specialist School parents/carers, staff and students understanding of how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff, contractors and volunteers
- all children and members of the Ballarat Specialist School community.

### **Rationale**

Ballarat Specialist School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

### **Implementation**

The Principal and School Leaders of Ballarat Specialist School will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly school campuses and other learning environments. The Principal and School Leaders of Ballarat Specialist School will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, volunteers, school councillors, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour, as documented below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

### **Acceptable behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, school councillors, contractors, and any other school community members involved in child-related work, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's *Statement of Commitment* to child safety at all times and adhering to the school's child safe policies
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or worried about their safety or safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership team and/or the child safety officer assigned
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.
- adhere to the Ballarat Specialist School Appropriate Touch Policy.

### **Unacceptable behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, school councillors, contractors, and any other school community members involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by educational, therapeutic or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc.) except where that communication is reasonable and relates only to school work, school related extra-curricular activities, a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

### **Links and Related Policies:**

The following are links to support material for schools:

- [DET - Child Safe Standards](#)

Related School Policies:

- BSS Responding and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse
- [Supervision and Duty of Care Policy BSS Onsite Supervision Policy?](#)

### **Evaluation:**

This code of conduct will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

# CHILD SAFE HR PRACTICES

## CHILD SAFE – STANDARD 4

### **Purpose**

To ensure that all Ballarat Specialist School HR practices support a child safe environment.

### **Objective**

To establish and articulate appropriate protocols, practices and procedures that ensure Ballarat Specialist School maintains a child safe environment.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All staff involved in HR processes including employment panels and office administration.

### **Rationale:**

Strong human resource practices promote child safe school environments and reduce the risk of child abuse. Ballarat Specialist School utilises policies and procedures for recruitment, supervision, training and managing performance that support a child safe school environment.

### **Implementation:**

- the school will ensure that position descriptions for all new positions, teaching and non-teaching, include the standard 'Child safe environments' clause as provided in the 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide
- for our existing staff, the school has promoted and will embed the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct in accordance with Standard 3
- as part of the selection process, the principal will implement practices to ensure satisfaction that external applicants meet the *Child Safe Standards* prior to the applicant's employment at the school
- when recruiting new staff, teaching, non-teaching or volunteers the school panels will monitor the following important child safety areas for assessment:
  - the applicant's motivation to work with children (personal or professional)
  - the applicant's relevant and verifiable child-related work experience
  - the applicant's understanding of professional boundaries
  - the applicant's communication skills.
- as part of the selection process for non-teaching staff engaged in child-connected work, the school will collect Working With Children Checks (WWCC)
- as part of the selection process for teachers, the principal will check the person's Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) status
- all selection panels will engage in a minimum of one verbal referee check to ascertain the person's history of work involving children and the person's suitability for the job and working with children
- the school acknowledges that certain specialist roles may present different child safety risks for the school, such as a school nurse, welfare counsellor, bus driver, sports coach, camp instructor or music teacher. At Ballarat Specialist School, these specialist roles will require at least two forms of personal identification with the same name and address and may require a criminal records check and/or greater referee checks to be completed
- the school may complete additional background searches online and through social media
- the school will ensure that all new school staff are inducted into the school's policies, codes of conduct, practices and procedures governing child safety. This will be supported by the school's induction program and Wellbeing and Administration Teams

- as part of the DET's Performance and Development process, school leaders will monitor and assess staff members' suitability for continuing child connected work. Staff WWCC will be monitored via eduPay on a fortnightly basis for upcoming membership expiration
- staff members with expired WWCC will not be permitted to attend work until the issue is rectified
- the school's Child Safety Policies and Procedures will be evaluated or as required by the school Wellbeing Team, with the findings being shared with the School Council. This information will support the School Council to be satisfied that the processes and strategies in place are assuring that school staff (teaching and non-teaching) and volunteers who engage in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety. Any concerns raised by the School Council will be appropriately addressed.

**Links and Related Policies:**

The following are links to support material for schools:

- [DET - Child Safe Standards](#)
- [VRQA - Staff Selection Checklist](#)

Related School Policies:

- [Child Protection Reporting Policy](#)
- [Supervision and Duty of Care Policy](#)
- [Working With Children Check Policy](#)
  - [Suitability policy](#)

# RESPONDING & REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

CHILD SAFE – STANDARD 5

## Purpose

The purpose of this Responding & Reporting suspected Child Abuse policy is to minimise the risk of harm to students.

## Objective

To inform staff, students and the broader community of our proactive processes, strategies and commitment to ensuring student safety.

## Scope

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff, contractors and volunteers
- all children and members of the Ballarat Specialist School community.

## Rationale

As members of a school community, we all have a moral obligation to protect any child under our care and supervision from foreseeable harm. As staff members of Ballarat Specialist School, we play an especially critical role in protecting children (including identifying, responding and reporting child abuse) and we must meet a range of legal obligations to do so. At Ballarat Specialist School, our procedures are:

- sensitive to student diversity
- publicly available via this policy and on our website
- accessible to children, staff and the wider community.

## Implementation

The Principal and School Leaders of Ballarat Specialist School will actively support the implementation of this policy. The team will monitor all known reports of child abuse and support inclusive and safe learning environments.

The Principal and School Leaders of Ballarat Specialist School will provide information, education and support to enable staff and community members to respond appropriately to suspicions of child abuse. All staff, volunteers, school councillors, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to respond appropriately to suspicions of child abuse. This policy applies in all situations, including off school campuses and in the use of digital technologies and social media.

## **1) Our Obligation to Protect Children**

- **All** school staff members have a moral and legal obligation and a Duty of Care to protect any child under their care from foreseeable harm (not just staff who are classified as mandatory reporters). Every staff member *must* respond to any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to an Emergency, Reporting to Authorities, Contacting Parents/Carers and Providing Ongoing Support (See Section 3: Four Critical Actions for School).

- Victorian legislation incorporates legal obligations in relation to reporting suspected sexual child abuse. Failing to meet these obligations can constitute a criminal offence, including a:
  - failure to disclose a sexual offence
  - failure to protect a child (where it is known that a person associated with their organisation poses a substantial risk of sexually abusing children).
- The easiest way to comply with our legal and moral obligations is to remember that **you must report any reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused.**
- This includes abuse that has, or is suspected to have, taken place *within or outside* of school grounds and hours.
- Further detailed information can be found following this DET link:
  - [PROTECT Children.](#)

All school staff members have a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children under their care and supervision from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. The question of what constitutes 'reasonable steps' will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. In relation to suspected child abuse, reasonable steps may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- acting on concerns and suspicions of abuse as soon as practicable, seeking appropriate advice or consulting with other professionals or agencies when the school staff member is unsure of what steps to take
- reporting the suspected child abuse to appropriate authorities such as the Victoria Police and DHHS Child Protection, arranging counselling and/or other appropriate welfare support for the child, providing on-going support to the child – this may include attending DHHS Child Protection Case Planning meetings, and convening regular Student Support Group meetings
- sharing information with other school based staff who will also be responsible for monitoring and providing on-going support to the child.

Duty of care also extends to students who are:

- Aged 17 years and over:
  - in circumstances where staff suspect that a student over the age of 17 is subject to abuse you should still follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools as outlined later in this document. Although DHHS Child Protection work with children under 17 they can still be contacted with concerns relating to students 17 and over for referral and advice.
- Involved in student sexual offending:
  - we have a duty of care towards all students involved in student sexual offending, including the alleged victim, assailant and any other students in the school who may have witnessed and/or been affected by the abusive behaviour.

All school staff members, visitors, trades people, contractors, volunteers, etc. have a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children within our school community from harm that is foreseeable. (This applies to everyone connected to the school environment.) It is particularly important that visitors or others associated with the school, such as contractors, etc. seek out school personnel (such as the leadership team) who can assist and provide advice in regards to any further steps that might need to be taken.

## 2) Identifying Signs of Child Abuse

At Ballarat Specialist School all staff members play a critical role in protecting children from child abuse. In some cases staff members may be the best-placed or only adult in a child's life who is in a position to identify and respond to signs that a:

- child is being abused, or is at risk of abuse
- school community member (including a school staff member) may be a perpetrator of child abuse.

At Ballarat Specialist School all staff members will receive training to support them in identifying signs of Child Abuse. Members of the Wellbeing Team, will have higher levels of expertise and be able to act as supporters of other staff members.

There are different types of abuse and all staff are required to be able to recognise the possible physical and behavioural indicators of:

- [Physical child abuse](#)
- [Child sexual abuse](#)
- [Grooming](#)
- [Emotional child abuse](#)
- [Neglect](#)
- [Family violence](#)
- [Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Sexual Behaviour in Children Under 10](#)

Please be aware that these links lead to information with explicit descriptions of abuse and may be distressing to engage with for some staff members. If you need to talk to someone, it is recommended that you speak to a member of the school's Wellbeing or Leadership teams about arranging appropriate support. You can also talk to your GP or another allied health professional. Government school staff can also contact the Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 008.

When identifying child abuse, it is critical to remember that:

- the trauma associated with child abuse can significantly impact upon the wellbeing and development of a child
- all concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child, or the conduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer must be acted upon as soon as practicable.

If physical and/or behavioural indicators lead you to suspect that a child has been or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, you *must* respond as soon as practicable by following the Four Critical Actions for School (see Section 3 below).

If you believe that a student is not being abused, but you still hold concerns for their safety or wellbeing, refer to advice about responding to concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or unborn child) to determine who to consult with, when to make a report and when to engage other wellbeing professionals. Follow this link for further information: [Responding to Other Concerns about the Wellbeing of a Child](#)

### **3) Four Critical Actions for Schools**

To comply with our legal and moral obligations we must report any reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools:

- 1) Responding to an Emergency
- 2) Reporting to Authorities
- 3) Contacting Parents/Carers
- 4) Providing Ongoing Support.

Staff at Ballarat Specialist School must take action if they suspect a child is being abused. Staff play a critical role in protecting children in our school's care.

- staff must act by following the 4 critical actions, as soon as an incident is witnessed, a disclosure is received or a reasonable belief is formed that a child has, or is at risk of being abused
- staff must act if they form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if they are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse)

- staff must use the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template included in this document to keep clear and comprehensive notes
- A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

*\* Remember, it is not our responsibility to investigate or prove/disprove any allegations of child abuse. It is our responsibility to respond and report our suspicions in a timely and appropriate manner.*

### **CRITICAL ACTION 1 – RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY**

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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.

### **CRITICAL ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES**

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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.

#### ***IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS 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.

You **must also** report **internally** to: The School Principal and/or Leadership Team member / Employee Conduct Branch / DET Security Services Unit.

#### ***IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS FROM 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.

You **must also** report **internally** to: School Principal and/or leadership team and DET Security Services Unit.

### **CRITICAL ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS**

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The Principal **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/carers (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 parents/carers 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).

### **CRITICAL ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT**

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The 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.

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

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.

## CONTACTS

**DHHS CHILD PROTECTION** - West Division 1800 075 599

After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78

**CHILD FIRST** - [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)

**VICTORIA POLICE** - 000 or contact your local police station

**DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT** - (03) 9589 6266

**STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT** - (03) 9637 2934

**EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH** - (03) 9637 2595

### FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

## Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

**PROTECT** THE EDUCATION STATE VICTORIA Department of Education and Training



#### YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member you play a critical role in protecting 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 (eg 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.

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

### 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.

You must also report internally to:

- **GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
  - School Principal and/or leadership team
  - Employee Conduct Branch
  - DET Security Services Unit
- **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
  - School Principal and/or leadership team
  - Diocesan education office
- **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
  - School Principal and/or school chairperson

#### 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:

- **GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**  
You must also report to:
  - School Principal and/or leadership team
  - DET Security Services Unit
- **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**  
You must also report to:
  - School Principal and/or leadership team
  - Diocesan education office
- **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**  
You must also report to:
  - School Principal and/or chairperson

### 3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your Principal 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 (eg 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 PROVIDING 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 AREA**  
North Division 1300 664 9777  
South Division 1300 666 796  
East Division 1300 360 381  
West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599  
West Division (Metro) 1300 664 9777

**AFTER HOURS**  
After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78

**CHILD FIRST**  
[www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)

**VICTORIA POLICE**  
000 or your local police station

**DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT**  
(03) 9589 6266

**STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT**  
(03) 9637 2934

**EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH**  
(03) 9637 2595

**DIOCESAN OFFICE**  
Melbourne (03) 9267 0228  
Ballarat (03) 6327 7135  
Sale (03) 6622 8800  
Sandhurst (03) 6443 2377

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA**  
(03) 9626 7200



#### 4) Responding to other Concerns about a Child

If you believe that a student is not being abused, but you still hold concerns for their safety or wellbeing, refer to advice about responding to concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or unborn child) to determine who to consult with, when to make a report and when to engage other wellbeing professionals. Follow this link for further information: [Responding to Other Concerns about the Wellbeing of a Child](#)

Regardless of the suspected cause, all concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or their unborn child) should be taken seriously and acted upon. This includes concerns about the wellbeing of a child, which do not appear to be the result of abuse.

Staff should make a referral to Child FIRST if:

- there is significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- the concerns have a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- the child's immediate safety is not compromised
- the school has discussed the referral with the family and they are supportive of it.

Staff must contact Victoria Police if:

- there is any concern for a child's immediate safety and/or
- a child is partaking in any risk taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child.

#### 5) Responding to suspected Child Abuse Template

- school staff will use the [DET template](#) beginning on the following pages to document any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. This template should be used in conjunction with the above Four Critical Actions
- completing the template should not impact on reporting times. If a child is in immediate danger, school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police
- whilst gathering information to make a report, it is not the role of school staff to investigate abuse, leave this to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection
- when completing this template the aim is to provide as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any reports and may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of Court proceedings. These notes may also later assist staff if they are required to provide evidence to support any decisions
- it is a requirement under **Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools** for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

#### 6) Privacy and Information Sharing

School staff members are permitted to share certain information about a child who has been impacted (or is suspected to have been impacted) by abuse with:

- other staff members in order to enable staff to best support and protect that child
- an officer from DHHS Child Protection, if the information requested may be of assistance to DHHS Child Protection in their investigation of protective concerns
- Victoria Police if the information may assist in the investigation of potential criminal offences, or may aid in the immediate protection and safety of the child.

## **7) Contact Details and More Information**

Within the Department of Education and Training, there are a number of supports available to Victorian government schools responding to incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, including:

### ***Security Services Unit (SSU)***

The Security Services Unit provides a 24-hour communications centre for schools and Departmental staff to report a range of incidents. On receiving notification of an incident involving child abuse the Security Services Unit immediately alerts the Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU) and relevant staff within the Central and Regional Office.

### ***Regional Offices***

Principals of Victorian government schools are required to maintain on-going contact with their Regional Office throughout any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Each region has an emergency management contact/s. These officers can provide initial advice and support to Victorian government schools during and after incidents, and assists schools to minimise the effects of trauma and enhance recovery.

### ***Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU)***

The Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU) works with Victorian Government schools following incidents of a sexual nature to ensure appropriate advice and supports are in place that prioritise the health and wellbeing of the children involved. The SIRU is notified by the Security Services Unit as soon as an incident involving sexual abuse (or problem sexual behaviour) is reported.

The SIRU will:

- provide timely and appropriate advice to Victorian Government schools
- support regions and Victorian Government schools to respond to critical incidents of a sexual nature
- advise Victorian Government schools to meet their legal obligations and duty of care responsibilities
- assist Principals and senior school staff from Victorian Government schools to manage incidents of a sexual nature in a manner that ensures adverse impact on the school community is minimised
- monitor the progress of school management of such incidents
- provide advice on appropriate response measures, such as counselling and management strategies to support those involved in allegations of sexual offending or problem sexual behaviour
- provide advice on the provision of a suitable level of support to school staff and members of the school community on whom the incident has impacted.

The SIRU works closely with other key agencies, such as Victoria Police SOCIT and the DHHS, and with organisations such as the Centre against Sexual Assault (CASA) to support student wellbeing in Victorian Government schools.

### ***Student Support Services***

The role of the Student Support Services (SSS) is to provide support to Victorian Government schools including:

- establishing a relationship with students and possibly their families
- providing a supportive, calm approach and acknowledging the issues raised
- clarifying the needs of the child
- evaluating the child's present strengths and resources
- evaluating possible ways of accommodating the child's identified needs, such as referral for specialist counselling and school-based supports
- documenting information and actions
- identifying the process for follow up and review
- ascertaining which intervention programs are most appropriate in meeting an individual child's needs
- working with the school staff on the appropriate strategies and supports needed for individual children.

### ***Employee Conduct Branch***

The Employee Conduct Branch is responsible for the implementation of policy and the provision of advice on complaint resolution procedures, unsatisfactory performance, serious misconduct (which would include allegations of child abuse), equal opportunity complaints, managing appeals against disciplinary action, criminal records checks and police liaison, as it relates to Victorian Government school and DET employees. The branch also manages discipline matters involving members of the teaching service (including Principal Class Officers), Student Support Services and public servants. A key role of the branch is to support Principals or designated officers in their management of processes, and provide advice to them concerning legislative and procedural frameworks.

The Employee Conduct Branch must be contacted on all issues of alleged serious misconduct including allegations of child abuse and grooming which involve a staff member employed by the Department. This includes teachers and Principals.

### ***Legal Division***

The Department's Legal Division provides specific advice to government school Principals in relation to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

### ***Communications Division***

The Department's Communications Division manages all Departmental media liaison, and can support Principals of Victorian government schools in responding to media enquiries relating to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

### **Roles of Other Relevant Authorities:**

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#### ***DHHS CHILD PROTECTION***

Under the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has a responsibility to provide child protection services for all children and young people under the age of 17 years, or where a protection order is in place, for children under the age of 18.

The main functions of DHHS Child Protection are to:

- receive reports from people who believe that a child is in need of protection or have significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child
- provide consultation and advice to people making reports
- investigate matters where it is believed that a child is at risk of significant harm
- refer children and families to services that assist in providing for the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children.

DHHS Child Protection will also intervene and bring cases before the Children's Court if a child's safety cannot be managed without intervention. DHHS Child Protection has a responsibility to provide adequate supervision, care and protection for children in accordance with orders granted by the Children's Court.

#### ***CHILD FIRST***

Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST) were introduced to give families an opportunity to obtain family services earlier at their own request or following a referral from others, including school staff.

Child FIRST is staffed by family services practitioners who are experienced in assessing the needs of vulnerable children and their families. Child FIRST teams work closely with community-based DHHS Child Protection workers.

The role of Child FIRST includes:

- providing a point of entry to a local network of family services
- receiving reports about vulnerable children where there are significant concerns about their wellbeing
- undertaking an initial identification and assessment of the risks to the child and the child's needs in consultation with DHHS Child Protection and other services
- identifying appropriate service responses for families.

#### ***Ballarat Specialist School – Child Safe Standard 5***

## **VICTORIA POLICE**

Both DHHS and Victoria Police have statutory responsibilities under the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* in relation to the protection of children. DHHS Child Protection is the lead agency responsible for the care and protection of children, while Victoria Police is responsible for criminal investigations into alleged child abuse.

Members of Victoria Police are protective interveners and mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. The predominant role of police in child abuse incidents is to detect and investigate alleged child physical and sexual abuse and to initiate legal proceedings where appropriate, against the alleged offender/s.

The key responsibilities of Victoria Police in relation to child abuse are to:

- ensure all police members are aware of relevant legislation and their responsibilities
- ensure all police accept and carry out their responsibilities under the Act
- conduct all investigations on the basis that the safety and welfare of the child are paramount
- plan investigations in collaboration with other, relevant agencies
- work with other agencies in accordance with agreed work practices
- provide information to other, relevant agencies
- provide training for staff, and, jointly, with relevant agencies.

Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT) have been established to ensure that appropriately trained and qualified police officers are available to respond to and investigate allegations of child abuse and sexual offences.

## **Counselling/Support Organisations:**

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### **THE CENTRE AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT**

There are 15 Centres Against Sexual Assault, who work to ensure that women, children and men who are victim/survivors of sexual offending have access to comprehensive and timely support and intervention to address their needs. Phone: 1800 806 292

### **GATEHOUSE CENTRE, ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**

Provides support and assistance to children and young people affected by sexual offending or problem sexual behaviours.

### **CHILDREN'S PROTECTION SOCIETY**

Provide advice and support to children and families to help them break out of the cycle of abuse, neglect, poverty and disadvantage through a creative portfolio of programs, resources and services. Phone: (03) 9450 0900

### **AUSTRALIAN CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION**

Provide recognised programs that counsel and support children to recovery, help professionals who work with children to better support at risk children and raise awareness of the causes and consequences of abuse. Phone: 1800 176 453

### **VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE**

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited provides legal advice and representation for the Koorie community. Phone: (03) 9322 3555 or country toll free on 1800 015 188

### **CHILD WISE**

Child Wise is Australia's leading international child protection charity committed to the prevention and reduction of sexual abuse and exploitation of children around the world. Phone: (03) 9695 8900

### **ABORIGINAL FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND LEGAL SERVICES**

Provides assistance to victims of family violence and sexual offending and to work with families and communities affected by violence.

## **HEADSPACE**

Headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds, along with assistance in promoting young peoples' wellbeing. This covers four core areas: mental health, physical health, work and study support and alcohol and other drug services. Information and services for young people, their families and friends as well as health professionals can be accessed through this website, headspace centres, online counselling service, eheadspace and post intervention suicide support program headspace - School Support.

## **Contact Information**

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### **24 HOUR SERVICES**

- Victoria Police - 000
- Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection - 131 278
- Department of Education and Training Security Services Unit - (03) 9589 6266

### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Security Services Unit - (03) 9589 6266
- Student Incident and Recovery Unit - (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487
- Legal Division - (03) 9637 3146
- Employee Assistance Program - 1300 361 008
- Employee Health - (03) 9637 2395
- Employee Conduct Branch - (03) 9637 2595
- Privacy Unit - (03) 9637 3601
- International Division - (03) 9651 3976
- Communications Division - (03) 9637 2871

### **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CHILD PROTECTION**

West Division – 1800 075 599

### **CHILD FIRST**

Delivered by CAFS: Direct line - 53 373 388 or, 1300 783 341

### **OTHER SERVICES**

- Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) - Emergency Counselling & Support Line - 1800 806 292
- Australian Childhood Foundation - 1800 176 453
- Child Wise - (03) 9695 8900
- Vic Aboriginal Education Association - (03) 9481 0800
- Child Safety Commission - 1300 782 978
- Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner - 1800 880 176
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) - (03) 9287 8800
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) - (03) 9411 9411

### **SEXUALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR TREATMENT SERVICES PROVIDERS**

- Aust Childhood Foundation - (03) 9874 3922
- Children's Protection Society - (03) 9450 0900
- Berry St - (03) 5330 5000
- Ballarat CASA - (03) 5320 3933

### **Links and Related Policies:**

The following are links to support material for schools:

- [DET - Child Safe Standards](#)
- [DET - Standard 5 Schools Guide](#)

Related School Policies:

-

## Responding to an Incident, Disclosure or Suspicion of Child Abuse

*If you are making a report to DHHS CHILD PROTECTION or VICTORIA POLICE you must seek advice before contacting parents/carers so as not to compromise any investigation or place a child at further risk.*

### STAFF MEMBER LEADING THE RESPONSE

NAME:

OCCUPATION:

LOCATION (SCHOOL ADDRESS):

RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD:

### CRITICAL ACTION 1: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO AN INCIDENT

**If anyone is in immediate danger school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police on 000.**

See action 1 of [Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

### RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

DID THE CHILD REQUIRE FIRST AID? PROVIDE DETAILS IF 'YES'.

WHO ADMINISTERED THIS? (NAME AND TITLE)

DID THE CHILD REQUIRE FURTHER IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE?

CURRENT LOCATION AND SAFETY STATUS:

*E.G. ARE ALL IMPACTED STUDENTS SAFE AND NOT IN ANY IMMEDIATE DANGER?*

*IF A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER SCHOOL STAFF SHOULD REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO VICTORIA POLICE ON 000*

**Child's Information:**

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

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:

**CHILD'S BACKGROUND**

**CULTURAL STATUS AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND**

*IF THE CHILD IS OF ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BACKGROUND, GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS MUST CONTACT THEIR KOORIE ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT OFFICER, AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS MUST CONTACT THE DIOCESAN EDUCATION OFFICE TO ARRANGE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SUPPORT. IF THE CHILD IS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT YOU MUST NOTIFY THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION DIVISION ON (03) 9637 2990*

ANY KNOWN PREVIOUS HISTORY OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

(PRIOR TO THIS INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OR INVOLVEMENT WITH AGENCIES):

## FAMILY BACKGROUND

FAMILY COMPOSITION (IF KNOWN):

*LIST PARENTING OR CARE ARRANGEMENTS AND SIBLING NAMES AND AGES*

ANY OTHER PEOPLE LIVING WITH THE CHILD (IF KNOWN):

## FAMILY BACKGROUND

DISABILITY, MENTAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES IN FAMILY (IF KNOWN):

LIKELY REACTION TO A REPORT BEING MADE (IF KNOWN):

## Details of the incident, disclosure or suspicion:

### GROUNDS FOR YOUR BELIEF THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN, OR IS AT RISK OF ABUSE

INDICATORS OR INSTANCES WHICH LED YOU TO BELIEVE THAT A CHILD/CHILDREN ARE SUBJECT TO CHILD ABUSE, OR AT RISK OF ABUSE:

*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.*

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)

NAME:

GENDER

DATE OF BIRTH:

RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD:

NOTHING IF THEY ARE WITHIN THE SCHOOL OR WITHIN THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY (THIS WILL IMPACT ON WHO YOU REPORT TO)

ADDRESS:

CONTACT DETAILS:

## CRITICAL ACTION 2: REPORTING

See Action 2 of Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

### REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

TICK THE AUTHORITIES YOU HAVE REPORTED TO:

- VICTORIA POLICE
- DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
- CHILD FIRST
- DECISION NOT TO REPORT

IF YOU'VE DECIDED NOT TO REPORT, LIST YOUR REASONS HERE. ALSO INCLUDE ANY FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY YOU BELOW:

PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS TO EITHER OF THE FOLLOWING:

**GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STAFF** MUST REPORT TO SECURITY SERVICES UNIT AND ALSO TO THE EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH IF THE INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION INVOLVES A STAFF MEMBER, CONTRACTOR OR VOLUNTEER.

**CATHOLIC SCHOOL STAFF** MUST REPORT TO THEIR CATHOLIC DIOCESAN EDUCATION OFFICE

DATE:

TIME:

AUTHORITY:

OUTCOMES FROM THE REPORT:

**REPORTING INTERNALLY**

**PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

**PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS TO EITHER OF THE FOLLOWING:**

**GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STAFF** MUST REPORT TO SECURITY SERVICES UNIT AND ALSO TO THE EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH IF THE INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION INVOLVES A STAFF MEMBER, CONTRACTOR OR VOLUNTEER

**CATHOLIC SCHOOL STAFF** MUST REPORT TO THEIR CATHOLIC DIOCESAN EDUCATION OFFICE

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

### CRITICAL ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

See Action 3 of Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

#### ACTIONS TAKEN

**PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS/CARERS (IF APPROPRIATE):**

SCHOOL STAFF MUST CONSULT WITH VICTORIA POLICE AND/OR DHHS 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).

HAVE YOU SOUGHT ADVICE FROM DHHS CHILD PROTECTION OR VICTORIA POLICE?

- NO
- YES

IS IT APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENT/CARER

- NO
- YES

LIST REASONS IF IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENT/CARER:

IF CONTACTING PARENT/CARER, PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:

NAME OF STAFF MEMBER MAKING THE CALL:

NAME OF PARENT/CARER RECEIVING THE CALL:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

## CRITICAL ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

See Action 4 of Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

### PLANNED ACTIONS

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:

### REFERRALS(S):

## PROCESS OF REVIEW

*Complete this section between 4-6 weeks after an incident, suspicion or disclosure of abuse in conjunction with the school Leadership Team. This will support staff and the school to continue to protect children in our care and to reflect on processes and the need for any follow up actions.*

## SAFETY AND WELLBEING

### CURRENT SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF THE CHILD

IS THE CHILD SAFE FROM ABUSE AND HARM?

- NO
- YES

*IF NOT CONSIDER THE NEED TO MAKE A FURTHER REPORT*

DOES THE CHILD HAVE ANY WELLBEING ISSUES THAT ARE NOT CURRENTLY BEING ADDRESSED?

- NO
- YES

*IF SO, CONSIDER HOW THESE CAN BE ADDRESSED AND CAPTURED WITHIN A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN*

### CURRENT WELLBEING OF OTHER CHILDREN WHO MAY BE IMPACTED BY THE ABUSE

ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHILDREN WHO MAY BE IMPACTED BY THE ABUSE?

- NO
- YES

IF SO HAVE THEIR WELLBEING NEEDS BEEN MET

- NO
- YES

*IF SO, CONSIDER HOW THESE CAN BE ADDRESSED AND CAPTURED WITHIN A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN*

### CURRENT WELLBEING OF IMPACTED STAFF MEMBERS

DOES THE STAFF MEMBER WHO MADE THE REPORT/ WITNESSED THE INCIDENT, FORMED A SUSPICION OR RECEIVED A DISCLOSURE REQUIRE ANY SUPPORT?

- NO
- YES

IF SO HAS THIS BEEN RECEIVED?

- NO
- YES

## REVIEW OF ACTIONS TAKEN

### **HAVE SCHOOL STAFF FOLLOWED THE FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOLS: RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS, DISCLOSURES OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE?**

WAS AN APPROPRIATE DECISION MADE IN RELATION TO WHEN TO ACT?

- NO
- YES

COULD THE SUSPECTED ABUSE HAVE BEEN DETECTED EARLIER?

- NO
- YES

#### **ACTION 1**

DID THE SCHOOL TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION IN AN EMERGENCY?

- NO
- YES

#### **ACTION 2**

WAS A REPORT MADE TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES AND INTERNALLY?

- NO
- YES

WERE SUBSEQUENT REPORTS MADE IF NECESSARY?

- NO
- YES

#### **ACTION 3**

DID THE SCHOOL CONTACT THE PARENTS/CARERS ASAP?

- NO
- YES

HAVE THE PARENTS CONTINUED TO BE ENGAGED IF APPROPRIATE?

- NO
- YES

#### **ACTION 4**

HAS THE SCHOOL PROVIDED ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT?

- NO
- YES

HAS A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN BEEN ESTABLISHED, IMPLEMENTED AND REVIEWED?

- NO
- YES

HAS A STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP BEEN ESTABLISHED?

- NO
- YES

WAS THE STUDENT APPROPRIATELY SUPPORTED IN ANY INTERVIEWS?

- NO
- YES

HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS BEEN RECEIVED?

- NO
- YES

HAVE THE COMPLAINTS BEEN RESOLVED?

- NO
- YES

# CHILD SAFE RISK MANAGEMENT

## CHILD SAFE – STANDARD 6

### **Purpose**

This Child Safe Risk Management policy is to ensure that all foreseeable risks are mitigated and controlled to minimise the risk of harm.

### **Objective**

The Child Safe Risk Management policy objective will inform processes for ensuring that ongoing risk assessments are evaluated, conducted, monitored and managed effectively by the school.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff, contractors and volunteers
- all children and members of the Ballarat Specialist School community.

### **Rationale**

A child safety risk management strategy is a formal and structured approach to managing risks associated with child safety. At Ballarat Specialist School we will develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure child safety in our school environment.

This document outlines how the school will manage risks, who is responsible for the process, and a description of the process itself.

### **Implementation**

- Annually, the Wellbeing Team will complete the following child safety risk management tasks:
  - identify the school's child safety risks across the range of school environments including excursions, swimming, camps, online, performance activities, etc. The team will complete a risk assessment similar to the one included in this documentation
  - identify any existing risk mitigation measures and/or internal controls already in place
  - assess and rate the school's child safety risks given the existing controls in place, taking into account the likelihood of risk, and the likely consequence of the risk
  - if the risk rating is more than the 'acceptable level', identify further risk management strategies through additional controls or other prevention, detection or mitigation strategies and then reassess the risk.
- The annual Child Safety risk management process will directly inform the development of the school's Child Safety plan.
- This process will be documented and shared with the school's Leadership Team and School Council.
- The risk assessment will take into consideration the increased level or risk associated with some activities and the vulnerability of particular groups of young people.
- The types of strategies that the school has in place or may be considered for the Child Safety plan include such things as:
  - Child Safety Code of Conduct for all school staff
  - Child Safety reporting procedures
  - guidance and training for School Councillors
  - induction for new staff, volunteers, pre-service teachers and contractors
  - training for students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour
  - clear windows in walls to enable visibility occupants
  - assessment of new or modified physical environments for child safety risks
  - supervision and monitoring of all school activities

- monitoring of online searching by students and staff
- performance and development processes and procedures
- pre-employment suitability checks as outlined in our Child Safe HR Practices document.
- The types of risks that the Wellbeing Team will analyse include, but is not limited to:
  - a culture of people not reporting issues
  - children alone with one other person unsupervised
  - recruitment of an inappropriate person
  - inappropriate behaviour not being reported
  - harassment via email, SMS or other social media
  - ad-hoc contractors on the premises for maintenance etc.
  - vulnerability of staff and students due to unknown personal details
  - unknown people and environments at excursions and/or camps
  - false allegations.

### Sample Risk Assessment Template

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
Lack of organisational culture of child safety – lack of effective leadership, public commitment and frequent messaging	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Severe	Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed</li> <li>• Statement of commitment to child safety is publicly available</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Inappropriate behaviour is not reported and addressed	Child safety code of conduct Clear child safety reporting procedures Performance management procedures	Unlikely	Severe	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed</li> <li>• Refresher training for staff – see eLearning mandatory reporting module</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Unquestioning trust of long term employees	Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Major	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresher training for staff – see eLearning</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
and contractors or norms	Clear child safety reporting procedures				mandatory reporting module		
Recruitment of an inappropriate person	WWCC or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Processes updated to require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal history search</li> <li>• Pre-employment reference check includes asking about child safety</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Engagement with children online	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate settings on all student technologies</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety Clear child safety reporting procedures	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of new or changed environments for child safety risks</li> <li>• Ensure Code and strategies apply in all school contexts</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Ad-hoc contractors on the premises (eg maintenance)	Child safe environments Information and awareness for visitors, staff,	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresher training for frequent contractors</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
	volunteers and contractors Adequate monitoring						

**Links and Related Policies:**

The following are links to support material for schools:

- [DET - Child Safe Standards](#)
- [DET - Risk Assessment Template](#)

Related School Policies:

- Supervision and Duty of Care Policy

# CHILD EMPOWERMENT

## CHILD SAFE – STANDARD 7

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Child Empowerment policy is to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum and educational program exists with Ballarat Specialist School to meet the diverse needs of its students and community.

### **Objective**

The objective of this document is to ensure informed curriculum choices are made in developing student empowerment skills that are based on evidence rich best practices.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff, contractors and volunteers
- all children and members of the Ballarat Specialist School community.

### **Rationale**

Ballarat Specialist School aims to deliver appropriate education about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- resilience
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

### **Implementation**

#### **Student Engagement Policy**

- The school's Engagement policy provides the basis for the school developing and maintaining a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.
- The school clearly communicates the expectations and aspirations of the school community through the school's values and the behaviour matrices in relation to student engagement, including strategies to address bullying, school attendance and behaviour.

#### **School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)**

- Ballarat Specialist School actively engages with the School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) program. The school has worked to develop an evidenced-based framework for preventing and responding to student behaviour. We aim to create a positive school climate, a culture of student competence and an open, responsive management system.
- In line with this, the school is developing a positive rewards ticketing system that provides physical rewards that students can attain for exhibiting behaviours that are outlined on our student matrix.

#### **Resources to Support Healthy and Respectful Relationships**

- Ballarat Specialist School has developed a formal partnership with the Head Space to support the mental health and wellbeing of our students. This support includes areas such as minimizing cyber bullying, violence against women, respectful relationships and sexuality education in partnership with organisations such as Victoria Police.
- Ballarat Specialist School is reviewing its Social and Emotional curriculum via the Victorian Curriculum and the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships resources. Our focus will be on further building

positive relationships and social skills and challenging negative attitudes such as discrimination and harassment that can lead to violence, often against women.

- The school cyclically reviews its Health Education policies to support the health messages being delivered within the classroom. It and engages with the school community for input into related policies and practices.
- Staff will be supported to best manage issues related to disclosure of personal information, giving careful consideration prior to approval for the collection of sensitive information, not promoting their own personal preferences, and selecting health education materials with care and consideration.
- Comprehensive, inclusive sexuality education is part of our school's health education curriculum, which is taught and assessed by teachers.
- The sexual health responsibilities of the school are shared with local health and welfare community providers and parents.
- Through planning, our school ensures that the learning and teaching in sexuality education is developmentally appropriate.
- Ballarat Specialist School supports and respects sexuality diversity including same sex attraction.
- The school aims to build student resilience and peer support practices to promote a student's ability to look after oneself, recognise and be aware of one's needs in others, and awareness of appropriate supports in school and in the community.
- The school is very active in supporting environments conducive to good mental health, and sharing appropriate resources with students to improve engagement and wellbeing outcomes.

### **Programs to Support Resilience**

The school is working to strengthen our social and emotional learning skills and enhance the resilience of our students through the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships project. We will be developing a school-wide approach based on the DET's [Building Resilience: A model to support children and young people](#).

### **Resources to support Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention**

The school is working to strengthen our curriculum in regards to teaching children about personal safety; focusing on the three key safety messages of recognise, react and report. Annually we will deliver a curriculum based on the *Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum* developed by Queensland's Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE).

### **Links and Related Policies**

The following are links to support material for schools:

- [DET - Child Safe Standards](#)

Related School Documents:

- Engagement Policy



### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed every three to four years.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

**Jun 2019**