

Sacred Heart College



Yarrowonga PC 21.0 Reporting and Responding to All Forms of Abuse Policy & Procedure

Ratified by Leadership	26 th July 2016
Responsibility for currency	Wellbeing Leader
Year for next major review	2019
Record of revisions	

RATIONALE

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the whole school community of Sacred Heart College, including leaders, staff, volunteers, students and their families, to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies and procedures developed to keep everyone safe from harm, including all forms of abuse.

COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and to be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures.

Child Safe Reporting and Responding Policy & Procedure (includes Disclosure of Abuse or Harm Procedure), Grievance Procedure.

The Student Wellbeing Leader has been appointed as the Child Safety Officer with specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or students in relation to Child Safety.

PROCEDURE

There are **FOUR** critical actions for schools responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

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 (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.

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

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.

ACTION 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.

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:

- School Principal and/or Student Wellbeing Leader
- Diocesan Education Office - Sandhurst

IF THE SOURCE OR 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/Student Wellbeing Leader
- Diocesan Education Office – Sandhurst.

ACTION 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/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).

ACTION 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 etc.

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.

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.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

AREA

North Division 1300 664 9777

AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78

CHILD FIRST

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or contact Yarrowonga Police Station (03) 57 44 3641

**RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE:
TEMPLATE FOR VICTORIAN SCHOOLS**

WHEN TO USE THIS TEMPLATE?

School staff should use this template 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 following: Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

Completing this Template should not impact on reporting times. If a child is in immediate danger, school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police.

Whilst you may need to gather the information to make a report, remember it is not the role of school staff to investigate abuse, leave this to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection.

WHY RECORD THIS INFORMATION?

When completing this template your aim should be 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 you if you 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.

Follow the link below to the template.

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

REVIEW

This policy and procedure is to be reviewed at least every three years and we undertake to seek feedback from students, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.

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Next Review: 2019