



Reporting Child Abuse Procedure

Scope

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

Step 1: Consider whether you should report the concerns of student abuse internally and/or externally

When a "Mandatory Reporter" (Registered Principals, teachers, school counsellors, registered psychologists, nurses and other individuals prescribed under legislation) forms a belief on reasonable grounds, that a child under the age of 17 (or 18 if they are affected by a protection order) is in need of protection because they have suffered, or are likely to suffer, significant harm due to physical injury or sexual abuse, they must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS") as soon as practicable.

Any person that forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child under the age of 17 (or 18 if they are affected by a protection order) is in need of protection from child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or neglect), may disclose that information to the police or the DHHS.

Any person (of or over the age of 18) that has a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16) by another person (of or over the age of 18) must disclose that information to the police (000) as soon as practicable.

For the purposes of the above obligations, the individual student, employees, board member, parent, guardian, volunteer or contractor of the School is encouraged to discuss their observations and concerns with the Child Safety Officers (Deputy Principal, Head of School Section or Head of Student Development), who can provide support to the reporter/child, and assist the person to make the report to DHHS or the police as required.

NB: While it is not mandatory, the School encourages all persons to report concerns about the abuse of students, even when the students are aged 17 and over.

Step 2: Make a Report

It may be that, following the previous step, a person decides to make a report to DHHS or the police with the support of a Child Safety Officer. A person may also make a report directly to DHHS or the police.

Report to DHHS

Ring DHHS at the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78.

Information for making a report:

- name, age and address of student
- the reason for suspecting that the behaviour or injury is a result of abuse;

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- an assessment of the immediate danger to the student;
- a description of the injury or behaviour observed;
- the current whereabouts of the student;
- any other information about the family; and
- any specific cultural details, e.g. English speaking, disability, etc.

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

Following a report, DHHS may need to contact the Principal about the notification. It would be a matter of courtesy to inform the Principal that a report has been made or is about to be made.

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

Reportable Conduct Scheme

When the person informs a Child Safety Officer about a child safety concern, a Case Management Group that may consist of the Child Safety Officers and any other individual deemed appropriate will be set up to discuss the matter and to offer support to the student and complainant.

The Case Management Group will determine whether the matter needs to be escalated to the Principal. Guidance will also be provided to the Principal regarding whether the allegation falls within the Reportable Conduct Scheme as "reportable conduct".

Reportable conduct means:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded;
- sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; or
- significant neglect of a child.

The Principal will make a report to the Commission for Children and Young People (Commission) within 3 business days of forming a reasonable belief that an employee, board member, volunteer or contractor has committed:

- reportable conduct; or
- misconduct that may involve reportable conduct,

whether or not the conduct or misconduct is alleged to have occurred within the course of the person's engagement.

The Principal will continue to provide updates to the Commission as required under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, including providing a 30-day report.

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Step 3: Investigate

If the complainant alleges that a crime has been committed by an employee, board member, volunteer or contractor, that person will be stood aside immediately.

The Principal may conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by DHHS or the police and will co-operate with the authorities as required. If an investigation is conducted, all employees, board members, volunteers or contractors must cooperate with the investigation.

If a report is made under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, an investigation must be conducted whether internally or externally. The Principal may seek external guidance including legal advice. Where this occurs, the Principal will cooperate with all regulatory authorities including the DHHS, police, Commission and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

If the student agrees to be interviewed by DHHS or the police, the Principal, a Child Safety Officer or a counsellor should offer to be present at the interview to give support to the student.

Where an allegation has been made, the School will make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of the alleged abuse and the School's response will be held in the Principal's office.

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

Step 4: Finalise Investigation and Offer Support

Following any investigation, findings and recommendations should be made. The School has full discretion to put in place safety management plans or take disciplinary action where it forms a reasonable belief that it is not safe for an employee, board member, volunteer or contractor to interact with children in accordance with its duty of care. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

Following a report, it is important to protect confidentiality and the interests of the student and family at all times. The School will endeavour to offer support to any student, employee, board member, volunteer or contractor involved where appropriate.

Once a report or investigation is finalised, an evaluation process should take place including a report to the board and review of policies and procedure as required.

Special Comments

Following the making of a report to the DHHS, any investigation that takes place is the responsibility of DHHS.

DHHS and/or the police may conduct interviews of students at the School without the parent's knowledge or consent.

When an officer from DHHS or the police come to the School's premises, the Principal or a member of the leadership team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the student.

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When a student is being interviewed by DHHS and/or the police, school employees must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the student (where appropriate).

Related Policies

- Child Safety Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Grievance, Complaint and Dispute Resolution Policy for the Carey Community
- Whistle-blower Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Working with Children Accreditation
- Rights and Responsibilities of Students
- Employees Code of Conduct
- Anti-discrimination
- Program Support Group Students with Disabilities
- Responsible Use of ICT/Mobile Devices
- Various ELC student welfare /safety policies

Approved by the Carey Board February 2020
Next review: 2022