

Reporting Child Abuse Procedure

1 Scope

This Procedure applies to all students, staff, 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.

Step 1:

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

When a "Mandatory Reporter" (Registered Principals, teachers, and nurses) 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 (131 278) 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, staff member, board member, parent, guardian, volunteer or contractor of the School should discuss their observations and concerns with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of School Section or Head of Student Development, who can provide support to the reporter/student, and assist the person to make the report to DHHS or the police as required.

NB: The School encourages all persons to report concerns about the abuse of students, even when the students are aged 18 and over.

Step 2

It may be that, following the previous step, a person decides to make a report to DHHS or the police with the support of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of School Section or Head of Student Development.

Making a report

Ring DHHS at the Child Protection Crisis Line on 131278.

Information for making a report

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

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

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

When the person informs the Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of School Section or Head of Student Development that he/she is to make/has made a report. A Case Management Group that may consist of the Principal, Deputy Principal Head of School Section or Head of Student Development will be set up to discuss the matter and to offer support to the student and reporter.

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

The Principal will 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.

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 3

If the student is agreeable to be interviewed by DHHS or the police, the Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of School Section or Head of Student Development should offer to be present at the interview to give support to the student.

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.

Step 4

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

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.

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

Other Related Policies

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