



Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations

Including Mandatory Reporting

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures our College has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse and to ensure that all staff and members of our College community understand and follow the various legal obligations that apply to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

Scope:

This policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, College staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the College (physical and online).

Definitions:

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- physical violence inflicted on a child
- sexual offences committed against a child
- grooming of a child by an adult
- family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include student to student incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the [Crimes Act 1958](#) (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child under the age of 16 to engage in sexual activity at a later time, either with the groomer or with another adult. Grooming can include communicating (including electronic communications and communicating by conduct) and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

College staff member

For the purpose of this policy a College staff member includes a contractor engaged by the College or school council to perform child-related work.



Policy:

Whittlesea Secondary College understands the important role our College plays in protecting children from abuse. We have a range of policies and measures in place to prevent child abuse from occurring at our College or during College activities.

Information for students:

- All students should feel safe to speak to any College staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at Whittlesea Secondary College, they should start with any teacher or adult at the College they are comfortable with.

Identifying child abuse:

To ensure we can respond in the best interests of students and children when complaints or concerns relating to child abuse are raised, all staff and relevant volunteers must:

- understand how to identify signs of child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators – for detailed information on identifying child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators refer to [Identify child abuse](#).
- understand their various legal obligations in relation to reporting child abuse to relevant authorities - for detailed information on the various legal obligations refer to Appendix A
- follow the below procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure our College acts in the best interests of students and children and complies with both our legal and Department policy obligations.

At Whittlesea Secondary College we recognise the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our College and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering and responding to child safety incidents or concerns.

Procedures for responding to an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse:

In responding to a child safety incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, Whittlesea Secondary College will follow:

- the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) for complaints and concerns relating to all forms of child abuse
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending
- our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy for complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful student behaviours.



College staff and volunteer responsibilities

1. Immediate action

If a College staff member or volunteer witnesses an incident of child abuse, or reasonably believes, suspects or receives a disclosure or allegation that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid (appropriate to their level of training) and call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Notify the Child Safety Officers, Assistant Principal of Inclusion and Resources or Assistant Principal of Engagement and Wellbeing any other member of the Principal Team as soon as possible, who will ensure our College follows the steps in these procedures.

NOTE for staff and volunteers:

- if you are uncertain if an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion gives rise to a concern about child abuse you must always err on the side of caution and report the concern to a member of the Principal Team.
- Any one of the Principal Team will assist in this matter.
- If the concerns relates to the conduct of the Assistant Principal/s notify the Principal. If it is regarding the Principal contact the [relevant regional office](#) or the North Western Victoria regional office, by contacting NWVR@education.vic.gov.au or 1300 338 691, who must then take on responsibility for ensuring our College follows these procedures.

Refer to Appendix B for guidance on how to respond to a disclosure of child abuse.

2. Reporting to authorities and referring to services

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant College staff have been informed, the Child Safety Officer/s Assistant Principal of Inclusion and Resources or Assistant Principal of Engagement and Wellbeing **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. The following steps will ensure our College complies with the four critical actions as well as additional actions required under the Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safety Officer/s) must ensure:

- all relevant information is reported to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, Victoria Police or relevant services where required
- the incident is reported to the Department's [eduSafe Plus portal](#) or the Incident Support and Operations Centre (1800 126 126) in accordance with the severity rating outlined in the [Managing and Reporting School Incidents Policy](#)
- all [reportable conduct](#) allegations or incidents are reported by the Principal to the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (03 7022 0005) – where a reportable conduct allegation is made against



the Principal, the Regional Director must be informed who will then make a report to Employee Conduct Branch.

NOTE: In circumstances where staff members are legally required to report child abuse to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police and they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another person at the College or the designated member of College staff does not agree that a report needs to be made, the staff member who has formed the reasonable belief must still contact DFFH Child Protection and Victoria Police to make the report.

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 or The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support) DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

3. Contacting parents or carers

The Child Safety Officer/s must ensure parents and carers are notified unless advised otherwise by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns in relation to informing parents/carers.

Principals may contact the Department of Education Legal Division for advice on notifying parents and carers, and where relevant, the wider College community.

For further guidance, refer to [PROTECT Contacting parents and carers](#)

4. Ongoing protection and support

The Child Safety Officer/s in consultation with the Principal Team must ensure appropriate steps are taken by the school to protect the child and other children from any continued risk of abuse. These steps must be taken in consultation with any relevant external agency or Department staff such as DFFH Child Protection, Victoria Police, Legal Division or Employee Conduct Branch. Ongoing protection will also include further reports to authorities if new information comes to light or further incidents occur.

Appropriate, culturally sensitive and ongoing support must be offered and provided to all affected students. Ongoing support will be based on any available advice from the Department, parents and carers, health practitioners, and other authorities (such as DFFH or Victoria Police) and may include referral to wellbeing professionals, development of a safety plan, student support group meetings, and, for student-to-student incidents, behaviour management and support measures.

5. Recordkeeping

The Child Safety Officer/s will ensure that:

- detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion are taken using the Department of Education Forms [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) or the [Responding to Student Sexual Offending: template](#) including, where possible, by the College staff member or volunteer who reported the incident, disclosure, or suspicion to them.



- detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by the College to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion.
- all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including the College's immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely in a secure admin file.

For College visitors and College community members

All community members aged 18 years or over have legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse – *refer to Appendix A for detailed information.*

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details, refer to the [Four Critical Actions](#).

Members of the community do not have to inform the College if they are making a disclosure to DFFH Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the College, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.

Additional requirements for all staff

All staff play an important role in supporting student safety and wellbeing and have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in the above 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. This means that if, after following the actions outlined in the procedure, a staff member reasonably believes that a child remains at risk of abuse, they must take the following steps:

- if they are concerned that the school has not taken reasonable steps to prevent or reduce the risk, raise these concerns with the principal in the first instance, and escalate to the regional office if they remain unsatisfied.
- report the matter to the relevant authorities where they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another staff member

Staff must refer to Appendix for further information on their obligations relating to reporting to authorities.

Communication:

This policy will be communicated to our College community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our College's website and COMPASS post
- Included in staff induction processes and annual staff training
- Included in volunteer induction processes and training for relevant volunteers



- Discussed in staff briefings /meetings/briefings
- Included in staff handbook or manual
- Hard copy available from College administration upon request

Further Information and Resources:

The following Department of Education (PAL) policies and guidelines are relevant to this policy:

- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#)
- [Managing and Reporting School Incidents](#)
- [Reportable Conduct](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)
- [Identify child abuse](#)
- [Report child abuse in schools \(including four critical actions\)](#)
- [Identify and respond to student sexual offending](#)

The following College policies are also relevant to this policy:

- Child Safety Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy



Policy Review and Approval:

Policy last reviewed	March 2026
Consultation	Student Representative Groups, College Leadership, School Council, Consultative Committee
Policy approved	School Council April 2026
Next scheduled review date	March 2028



Appendix

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 Four 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).

■ It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

* 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 / REFERRING TO SERVICES

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, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must** also report internally to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- Employee Conduct Branch

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

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:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or chairperson.

OTHER CONCERNS

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/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

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

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 and support.

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 664 977**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 360 391**
West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**.

CHILD FIRST

<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>

ORANGE DOOR

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE
1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT
1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE

Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA

(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT

The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <http://www.lookout.org.au>
Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.



PROTECT

THE EDUCATION STATE

VICTORIA
Education and Training

CECV
Catholic education commission of victoria inc

Victorian
Government



Understanding incidents in my school

REPORT FOR
SUPPORT

The Managing and Reporting School Incidents (including emergencies) Policy outlines the approach and key actions to manage school incidents. The policy includes an incident severity rating to triage the management of incidents end-to-end. Under this policy, the principal is responsible for the initial severity rating and reporting of incidents.

Refer to the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) for more information: www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal

Understanding the severity of incidents and when to report them

Incident severity rating	Description	Schools report to ISOC	Department response to report
Extreme (Red)	Impact on student or staff health, safety and wellbeing and on the continuity of school operations is catastrophic. To be managed locally with support from the region, and overall leadership accountability by the department's Central Incident Commander and reported in eduSafe Plus.	Immediately (within one hour)	Immediately (within one hour)
High (Orange)	Impact or risk of impact on student health, safety and wellbeing and on the continuity of school operations is major to severe. To be managed locally, governed and supported by the region and reported in eduSafe Plus.	As soon as possible (within three hours)	As soon as possible (within three hours)
Medium (Yellow)	Impact or risk of impact on student or staff health, safety and wellbeing and on the continuity of school operations is moderate. To be managed and governed locally and reported in eduSafe Plus.	As soon as possible (within one working day)	As soon as possible (within one working day)
Low (Blue)	Minor impact or risk of impact on student health, safety and wellbeing and on the continuity of school operations. To be managed and governed locally and recorded within two working days.	As soon as possible (within two working days)	As soon as possible (within two working days)

Consider the **local context** when assessing the severity rating such as incident pattern or history and student characteristics. These could include a **student's possible vulnerability** (age, culture, gender, history of trauma, physical/mental capacity, balance of power between involved parties) and **relevant medical history**.

How to rate the severity of an incident

Severity rating: decision-making matrix

Factor 2: Impact on school operations or seriousness of conduct involved with a consideration of scale	Catastrophic • School operations cease for the whole day and/or • Conduct that requires police notification and immediate intervention Scale: Incident may involve numerous students or staff	N/A*	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	Severe • Whole of school operations disrupted and/or • Conduct that requires police notification and attendance/intervention Scale: Incident may involve many students or staff	High	High	High	High	High	Extreme
	Major • Key school operations temporarily disrupted and/or • Conduct that requires police notification Scale: Incident may involve multiple students or staff	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Extreme
	Moderate • Minor workarounds could return school to normal operations and/or • Conduct that may require police notification Scale: Incident may involve a few students or staff	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	Minor • School operations continue with slight interruptions and/or • Conduct that may require staff intervention and notification to the Principal Scale: Incident may involve a single student or staff	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	No Impact • Incident has no impact on school operations and does not involve conduct that may require police notification and intervention	N/A*	Low	Medium	Medium	High	N/A*
Severity rating: decision-making matrix		No Impact No impact on student or staff health, safety and wellbeing	Minor Minor injury / ill health requiring no first aid or peer support for stress/trauma incident	Moderate Injury / ill health requiring first aid or psychological first aid for stress/trauma incident	Major Injury/ill health requiring medical attention or stress/trauma incident requiring professional support relevant to the injury	Severe Injury/ill health requiring hospital admission or stress/trauma incident requiring ongoing clinical support	Catastrophic Fatality, permanent disability or widespread traumatic incident requiring extensive ongoing clinical support
Factor 1: Impact on student, or student and staff health, safety and wellbeing with consideration of future support required							

*not applicable as any catastrophic incident will have impact

Notes and Key Contacts



1800 126 126
REPORT FOR SUPPORT



Managing incidents in my school

REPORT FOR
SUPPORT

What do I need to report to the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) or on eduSafe plus

An incident is reportable if it:

- causes harm or creates a risk of causing harm to a student's health, safety or wellbeing either directly or indirectly while under the care or supervision of the school, including international students
- impacts a student and is brought to the attention of the school, regardless of when or where it occurred
- causes harm or creates a risk of causing harm to an employee's health, safety or wellbeing either directly or indirectly in the work setting, where the incident also impacts on student health, safety and wellbeing and/or continuity of school operations
- affects or risks affecting the continuity of school operations, including matters of security (including cyber security), property damage and emergencies
- requires police notification or involves matters of serious conduct
- is a WorkSafe notifiable incident.

Incidents in schools include:

Factor 1: Incidents that impact or risk impacting on the health, safety and wellbeing of students or staff

- when students are under the care or supervision of the school, including all instances of restraint and seclusion
- when the incident is brought to the attention of the school, regardless of when or where it occurred
- where the incident impacts on staff and students and/or the continuity of school operations
- where the principal needs incident support from the region or central offices.

Examples:

- death or suicide of a student, staff member or member of the school community that may impact students in the school setting
- self-harm/injury or threats of suicide
- injuries requiring treatment by a doctor, transport by ambulance or hospitalisation
- concerning mental health and traumatic incidents requiring peer, professional or clinical support
- incidents that did not lead to injury or death but very nearly did
- incidents of a sexual nature, including concerning student behaviour of a sexual nature*
- abuse or risk of abuse or neglect including online child abuse (mandatory reporting obligations may also apply)*
- missing student
- online bullying, inappropriate use of social media and/or mobile phones.

* refer to the department's PROTECT program: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/report.aspx

Factor 2a: Incidents that impact on the continuity of school operations, including property damage and emergencies, for example:

- damage to parts of a school building or its content
- loss of essential service
- emergency situations and warnings
- bomb threats.

Factor 2b: Incidents that involve matters of serious conduct, for example:

- alleged criminal activity
- aggressive behaviour or actions or behaviours of concern
- forced marriage or human rights abuse
- family violence
- human trafficking
- sexual exploitation
- suspicious activity within or near school environment.

Incidents that don't require reporting:

- those with no impact or risk of impact on student health, safety and wellbeing, such as a grazed knee (these incidents should be managed locally and recorded in eduSafe Plus sick bay module)
- where school operations continue with slight interruptions, such as a ten minute power outage
- generally, incidents involving the health, safety and wellbeing of staff only are out of scope and should be reported as a non critical IRIS incident in eduSafe Plus.

Other department reporting obligations still apply.

Identify and respond

