



**ASCOT VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL  
CHILD SAFE STANDARD 5-  
PROCESSES FOR RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD  
ABUSE – MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY**

Developed July-November 2016.

Passed by School Council 19th December 2016

**INTENT OF CHILD SAFE STANDARD 5**

Ascot Vale Primary School's policies and procedures for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse must enable individuals to take the appropriate course of action to protect the safety of students.

**MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY**

**Purpose of this policy**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- define the roles and responsibilities of school staff in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- enable staff to identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- enable staff to make a report of a child or young person who may in need of protection
- Enable staff to comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law and fulfil their duty of care.

**Reporting child protection concerns**

Mandatory reporters, who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection. This policy and procedures for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse applies to all staff involved in child-connected work in all school environments and outside of school hours.

All other school staff who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is:

- Is in need of protection, should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.
- Is displaying sexually abusive behaviours and is need of therapeutic treatment should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection.

If staff have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person they are should report their concerns to DHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.

In cases where staff have concerns about a child or young person, they should also discuss their concerns with the principal or a member of the school leadership team.

**Reporting criminal child sexual abuse - failure to disclose offence**

Any staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 must disclose that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence, except in limited circumstances such as where the information has already been reported to DHHS Child Protection.

The offence applies to **all adults** in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children. To read more information about the 'failure to disclose' offence, see: [Department of Justice and Regulation – Failure to disclose offence](#)

### **Duty of care**

School staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care they should take immediate action.

In the case of a child who may be in need of protection or therapeutic treatment, or where there are significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child, school staff can discharge this duty of care by taking action which includes the following:

- reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency (as identified above)
- notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

### **Protecting children from the risk of sexual abuse - failure to protect offence**

Any staff member in a position of authority, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

The offence applies only to **adults in a position of authority** within an organisation, including Principals, senior school staff, regional directors and other senior managers.

To read more information about the 'failure to protect offence', see: [Department of Justice and Regulations – Failure to protect offence](#) Note: Department policies already require school staff to uphold a high standard of care in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

For more information about managing and responding to the risk of abuse see: *Duty of care, Responding to Student Sexual Assault* and *Risk Management* under [Department resources](#) below.

### **Forming a 'reasonable belief'**

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

### **Types of child abuse and indicators of harm**

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing.

Types of child abuse include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- medical neglect
- family violence
- human trafficking (including forced marriage)
- sexual exploitation (including pornography and prostitution).

A report should be made to DHHS Child Protection in circumstances where, for example:

- the child is engaging in risk-taking behaviour
- female genital mutilation has occurred, or there is a risk of it occurring
- there is a risk to an unborn child
- a child or young person is exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours
- there are indications that a child is being groomed. For information see: [Department of Justice and Regulation – Grooming offence](#).

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

**Note:** For full definitions for all of the types of child abuse and a comprehensive list of the indicators of harm, see: Appendix 2 in *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people* under [Department resources](#) below.

### When to Report

The following table sets out when to report a concern that a child or a young person has been abused, or is in need of protection.

1) Mandatory Reporting – DHHS Child Protection	By Whom	To Whom
Mandatory reporters must make a report as soon as practicable if, in the course of practising their profession or carrying out their duties, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection, as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child’s parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006</i> (Vic)</li> <li>• Principals of government and non-government schools</li> <li>• Registered medical practitioners</li> <li>• Nurses</li> <li>• All members of the police force</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHHS Child Protection</li> </ul>

<b>2) Child in need of protection</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>To Whom</b>
<p>Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection for any of the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child has been abandoned and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.</li> <li>• The child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.</li> <li>• The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.</li> <li>• The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and their parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.</li> <li>• The child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.</li> <li>• The child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be significantly harmed and the parents are unable or unwilling to provide basic care, or effective medical or other remedial care.</li> </ul>	Any person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHS Child Protection</li> <li>• Victoria Police</li> </ul>
<b>3) Child displaying sexually abusive behaviours and in need of therapeutic treatment</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>To Whom</b>
Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child who is 10 years of age or over, but under 15 years of age, is in need of therapeutic treatment because he or she has exhibited sexually-abusive behaviours.	Any person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHS Child Protection</li> </ul>
<b>4) Significant concerns about wellbeing of a child</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>To Whom</b>
Any person may make a report if they have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child.	Any person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHS Child Protection</li> <li>• Child FIRST</li> </ul>
<b>5) Reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16.</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>To Whom</b>
Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to police. It is a criminal offence not to make a report, except in the following	Any person aged 18 or over	Victoria Police

<p>circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The victim is 16 years of age or older and does not have an intellectual disability that limits his/her capacity to make an informed decision; and he/she does not want the information reported to the police</li> <li>▪ The victim has disclosed the information in confidence in the course of a therapeutic relationship with you as a registered medical practitioner or counsellor.</li> <li>▪ The victim turned 16 years of age before 27 October 2014.</li> </ul> <p>Reasonable excuses for failing to comply with the requirement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a reasonable belief that the information has already been reported to police or DHHS Child Protection disclosing all of the information</li> <li>▪ a reasonable fear that the disclosure will place someone (other than the alleged perpetrator) at risk of harm</li> </ul>		
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### Making a report

This table describes how to make a mandatory report, to report child abuse or child protection concerns.

#### **Step/ Description**

1	<p><b>In case of emergency or if a child is in immediate danger contact Triple Zero (000) or the local police station.</b></p> <p>Alternatively, to report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours 7 days, toll free)</p>
2	<p>Keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ information that has led to concerns about the child's safety (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)</li> <li>▪ the source of this information (e.g. observation of behaviour, report from child or another person)</li> <li>▪ the actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with principal, report to DHHS Child Protection etc.).</li> </ul>
3	<p>Discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the principal or a member of the school leadership team. The individual staff member should then make their own assessment about whether they should make a report about the child or young person and to whom the report should be made.</p>
4	<p>Gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person</li> <li>• the details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns</li> <li>• the individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person, if known.</li> </ul>
5	<p>Make a report to the relevant agency. To report concerns that are life threatening phone 000 or the local police station. To find the nearest Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team contact your local police station or <a href="#">click here</a>)</p> <p>To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hrs 7 days, toll free)</p> <p>To report concerns to DHHS Child Protection, contact your local child protection office.</p>
6	<p>Make a written record of the report which includes the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the date and time of the report and a summary of what was reported</li> <li>• the name and position of the person who made the report and the person who received the report.</li> </ul>
7	<p>Notify relevant school staff and/or Department staff of a report to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST. For Victorian government schools, the allegations must be reported to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ principal or member of the school leadership team</li> <li>▪ Department's Security Services Unit on (03) 9589 6266</li> <li>▪ relevant Regional Office</li> <li>▪ Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487.</li> </ul> <p>In the case of international students, the principal must notify the International Education Division on (03) 9637 2990 to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student.</p> <p>In the case of Koorie students, the principal must notify the Regional Office to ensure that the regional Koorie support officer can arrange appropriate support for the student.</p>

### Potential Consequences of making a report

See <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx#link59> for a table describing the potential consequences of making a report.

**If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.**

### Review

This policy is scheduled for review in 3 years or as required by DET.

### Relevant Documents / Links

1. DET RESOURCES - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx#link57>
2. DHHS Child Protection & Child FIRST - <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection>  
<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/family-and-parenting-support/family-services/child-first-child-and-family-information,-referral-and-support-teams>
3. DET – related policies – <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx#link40>
4. Related Legislation
5. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx#link39>
6. VRQA Child Safe Standards <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>