

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS POLICY GRM 1.15.4

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Policy Category:	Governance and Risk Management
Policy Owner:	Principal
Approving Body:	College Board

1. Context

SEDA College (Victoria) has a duty of care and is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, regardless of their age, culture, beliefs, socio-economic circumstances, disability, family living situation, child rearing practices or educational level. There is a culture of 'no tolerance' for child abuse.

The College recognises and respects the diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences of its students and school community. All child safety responses will be inclusive and sensitive to the characteristics of each child, including their cultural background, disability, sexual orientation, and family circumstances.

The College is required in accordance with the mandatory reporting requirements of the Children, Youth and Families Act (2005), to take immediate action following a disclosure of, or concerns about, alleged child abuse or sexual assault.

The Child Safe Standards under Ministerial Order 1359 must be complied with to create and maintain a child safe organisation. All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. As members of a community, we all have a moral obligation to protect any child under our care and supervision from foreseeable harm. Professionals who work with children play a vital role in protecting children from abuse by responding and reporting any incidents, disclosures or suspicions. They are often best placed to identify signs and behaviours that may indicate that a child has been subject to abuse, or that a school community member or a school staff member may be a perpetrator of abuse.

This policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment.

In Victoria, a joint framework, *PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools*, involving the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) exists to protect the safety of children and young people.

The College has adopted the procedures of the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*. All teachers, other school staff members, volunteers, contractors, and other service providers must understand and abide by the professional, moral and legal obligations to implement child abuse and safety policies, protocols and practices.

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

Staff have a legal responsibility to respond to serious incidences involving abuse and neglect and to report incidences.

2. Definitions

A reference or term included in this policy is defined as follows;

"SEDA College" or "the College" refers to SEDA College (Victoria).

"Staff" or "staff member" or "employee" in this policy includes all employees of SEDA College (Victoria).

For the purpose of this policy, an employee is a person of or over the age of 18 years who is:

- an employee of SEDA College, whether or not the person is employed in connection with any work or activities of SEDA College that relate to children; or
- engaged by SEDA College to provide services, including volunteers and volunteers from external agencies, secondees, individual business owners who employ or engage staff, contractors, office holders and directors of companies where the director performs work for the organisation, whether or not the person provides services to children.

"Children and young people" as defined by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) means a person under the age of 18 years, but for the purposes of this policy, includes all children and young people enrolled at SEDA College (Victoria), regardless of their age.

"VIT" is the Victorian Institute of Teaching; an independent statutory authority for the teaching profession, whose primary function is to regulate members of the teaching profession.

"Sexual offences" are actions that happen when an adult involves a child who is at least 10 years old in sexual activities or makes the child witness sexual actions that are not suitable for their age. These actions are against the law and are controlled by the Crimes Act of 1958 in Victoria. Sexual abuse can take many forms, like touching inappropriately, sexual acts, watching others do sexual things, or showing sexual images or videos.

"Physical abuse" can consist of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person.

"Sexual abuse" is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity.

"Emotional abuse" occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence.

"Grooming" for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16, as per the Crimes Act 1958 – Section 49M, is defined as any conduct by an adult (aged 18 or over) involving communication, whether verbal, written, electronic, or behavioural, with a child under the age of 16, or with a person who has care, supervision, or authority over that child, where the adult intends to facilitate the child's involvement in a sexual offence committed by themselves or another adult.

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Grooming may occur regardless of whether the child or carer responds to the communication, even if the communication does not contain sexual content and across any location, including outside Victoria, provided there is a connection to Victoria (e.g., the child, carer, or offender is located in Victoria, or the intended offence is to occur in Victoria).

This behaviour constitutes a criminal offence under Victorian law and carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment.

"Neglect" includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health or physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk.

"Serious emotional or psychological harm" may occur when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or the witnessing of family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and putdowns, or persistent coldness from a person to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed, or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological harm could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

"Family violence" is behaviour towards a family member that may include physical violence or threats of violence, verbal abuse, including threats, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse or financial and social abuse.

3. Application

This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school events, activities and services.

All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests. The College understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation)
- Family violence
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect (including medical neglect)
- Grooming

4. Statement of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand the various legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety that apply to the College. Specifically, this policy aims to ensure:

- That children's rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against abuse and neglect.
- Defined roles and responsibilities of school staff in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Empowerment of children so they feel confident to report incidences.

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- Staff and community members understand the specific procedures that are applicable at our school related to mandatory reporting.
- Staff have the knowledge and skills to identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection.
- Staff understand how a suspicion or reasonable belief is formed
- Staff comply with obligation under the Victorian reportable conduct scheme
- Staff comply with legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.
- Staff take appropriate steps to make a report on a child or young person who may be in need of protection.
- The school is compliant with Ministerial Order 1359 related to the Child Safe Standards
- The Principal holds overall responsibility for implementing this policy and ensuring compliance. All school staff are responsible for acting on any concerns or disclosures of child abuse, following the Four Critical Actions for Schools. The Child Safety Champion and Leadership Team and Child Safety Officers support staff in understanding and fulfilling these obligations.

5. Procedures

The Principal has the overall responsibility of implementing this policy, but all staff have a critical role to play in implementing this policy.

5.1 Legislative and regulatory requirements

The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.) introduced the Victorian Child Safe Standards, in January 2016. Following a review of those standards, changes have been made to those standards, that were effective from 1 July 2022. The Victorian Child Safe Standards set out minimum requirements and outline the actions organisations must take to keep children and young people safe.

SEDA College staff, volunteers and members of the School Board must comply with the legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under six separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements:

- *The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)*
- *The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)*
- *The Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)*
- *The Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)*
- *The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic.)*
- *The Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic.)*

These legislative obligations exist in addition to moral and duty of care obligations, which require Schools and its members to protect any child under their care and supervision from foreseeable harm.

SEDA College is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) meaning that, where legislated requirements are met, can share confidential information with other ISEs to promote child wellbeing or safety under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or the Family Violence Information sharing Scheme (FVISS).

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5.2 Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

There can be physical or behavioural indicators of child abuse and neglect, or a combination of both. Sometimes, one sign or a few signs don't automatically mean there's abuse or neglect, however, the repeated occurrence of either a physical or behavioural indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert school staff to the possibility of child abuse or neglect.

Physical abuse	Emotional abuse
<p>The following indicators may indicate physical abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises in unlikely places (face, back, ears, hands, buttocks, upper thighs, and soft parts of the body) • Inconsistent or absent explanation of bruises • Pressure marks from fingers on the face, chest or back • Skull fracture, multiple fractures of different ages • Suspicious burns • Poisoning or significant over medicating 	<p>The following behavioural indicators may indicate emotional abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding home (particularly if the abuser is in the family home) • Running away or continually staying at friend's houses • Fear of the dark, not wanting to go to bed, bedwetting or nightmares • Lying or stealing • Lack of trust in adults • Poor self-image/self-esteem, poor academic performance, poor peer relationships • Secretive, demanding, or disruptive behaviour

Child sexual abuse is more commonly committed by someone who is known to and trusted by the child and is also often someone highly trusted within their family, community, school and/or other institutions, such as the Church.

For further definitions of all types of child abuse, a comprehensive list of the indicators of harm and advice on identifying perpetrators of child sexual abuse, refer to the protocol *PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools*.
<https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/identify-child-abuse>

5.3 Mandatory reporting

Under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), A mandatory reporter must report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Child Protection) (formerly part of the Department of health and Human Services) 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 has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical and/or sexual abuse, and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

Mandatory Reporters must:

- make a report as soon as possible, even if the principal or senior staff have a different view
- make a report even if they think that the report has been or will be made by someone else
- make a new report each time they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection
- disclose information to a police officer as soon as it is practicable to do so

It may be a criminal offence not to report in these circumstances.

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Individuals who are required to report:

- Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers, including principals
- school staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT
- registered doctors, nurses and all members of the police force
- registered psychologists
- people in religious ministry
- staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing, including (but not limited to) school health and wellbeing staff, primary welfare officers, student wellbeing coordinators, mental health practitioners, chaplains, and Student Support Services staff.

5.4 Reasonable belief

Where College staff members are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. If a staff member has witnessed potentially abusive behaviour, has a suspicion, or has received a disclosure of child abuse, they must determine whether these observations or receipt of such information have caused the staff member to form a reasonable belief.

A reasonable belief or a belief on reasonable grounds is not the same as having proof but is more than rumor or speculation. A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

A reasonable belief might be formed if:

- A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- Any person tells you that they believe someone has been abused; this may include a child who is talking about themselves
- You observe physical or behavioural indicators of abuse, as described in *Protect: identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools*
- A child or young person exhibits sexually abusive or age-inappropriate behaviour(s)
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development cause you to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused

5.5 Reportable Conduct

The Reportable Conduct Scheme was created under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.) and requires the Principal to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) if an allegation of reportable conduct (a reportable allegation) is made against one of its employees.

The SEDA College Reportable Conduct Policy details the procedures and the obligations of all staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

All school staff are required to notify the Principal or, if the Principal is involved in the allegation, a member of the School Executive Team and the School Board if they have a reportable allegation.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not change mandatory reporting or other reporting obligations, including internal reporting and reporting criminal behaviour to Victoria Police. Reportable conduct reporting should be done in addition to these other reporting obligations.

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5.6 Failure to disclose

All adults, not just mandatory reporters, must report to Victoria Police where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16.

Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence unless you have a 'reasonable excuse' or have an 'exemption' from doing so.

Reasonable excuses for not reporting a sexual offence include where:

- There is a fear for the safety for the person reporting or for someone connected to the incident
- The sexual offence has already been reported, for example, via mandatory reporting.

Under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), if you are an adult that reasonably believes that a sexual offence, including grooming has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, then you must make a report to Victoria Police on 000 or your local police station.

Failure to disclose that information to Victoria Police is a criminal offence.

The offence of Failure to disclose differs from the mandatory reporting in the following ways:

- Mandatory reporting is required to protect a child from physical injury and sexual abuse. The offence of failure to disclose only applies to sexual abuse.
- Mandatory reporting is an obligation on mandatory reporters. Reporting under failure to disclose requirement is an obligation on all adults (with some exemptions)
- Mandatory reports are made to Child Protection. Failure to disclose reports are made to Victoria Police.
- Mandatory Reports must be made to Child Protection even if there is reason to believe a report has been made to Victoria Police

Failure to disclose reports do not need to be made to Victoria Police if there is reason to believe a report has been made to Child Protection.

For more information, visit the *Department of Justice and Community Safety website: Failure to disclose offence*

5.7 Failure to protect

Under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), those in positions of authority, such as the Principal, Assistant Principal and school leadership staff (Responsible Persons), who become aware that an adult associated with the school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse (including through grooming) to a child under the care, of the school, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This obligation applies where there is a known substantial risk that an adult associated with the organisation may commit a sexual offence against a relevant child. It is not a criminal offence to fail to address every possible risk, but failure to act on a substantial risk may amount to a criminal offence.

Substantial risk is assessed based on a range of factors, including:

- the likelihood or probability that the child will become the victim of a sexual offence
- the nature of the relationship between the child and the adult who may pose a risk
- the background of the adult, including any past or alleged misconduct
- any vulnerabilities particular to the child that may increase the likelihood of victimisation

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- any other relevant facts indicating a substantial risk of a sexual offence being committed

When determining whether a risk is substantial, courts will consider all facts and circumstances objectively, including whether a reasonable person would have judged the risk as substantial. It is not necessary to prove that a sexual offence (e.g. indecent assault or rape) was committed.

A person in a position of authority must not negligently fail to reduce or remove the risk.

This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. Failure to do so may be a criminal offence.

If the responsible person fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to the person committing a criminal offence.

For more information, visit the *Department of Justice and Community Safety website: Failure to protect offence*.

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>

5.8 Grooming

Under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), grooming describes predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child under the age of 16 and applies to persons who are 18 years of age or over. The conduct does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity and it is immaterial as to whether or not the child responds to the communication.

Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails. The offence can be committed by any person aged 18 years or over. It does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

For more information about managing and responding to the risk of abuse refer to the protocols of *PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools*, in conjunction with *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

5.9 Required actions under this Policy

The SEDA College Board, Principal, staff and every person involved in the College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they have individually and collectively, to ensure that complaints and concerns relating to child abuse are taken seriously, and to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people are at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

As part of this responsibility the College will display the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse diagram in the Head Office staffroom and on MySEDA to ensure all school staff are aware of the actions to take as soon as they witness a child abuse incident, receive a disclosure, or form a reasonable suspicion or belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused.

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5.10 Staff Awareness and Training

All teachers and staff members at SEDA College will be informed and provided with training regarding their mandatory reporting responsibilities upon starting their employment and at least annually thereafter.

5.11 Becoming aware of a child abuse incident

There are four main ways in which a College staff member may become aware that a child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse:

Witnessing an incident

- If you witness an incident where you believe a child has been subjected to, or may be at risk of, abuse, including exposure to family violence, you must first take immediate action to protect the safety of the child or children involved and then refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

Forming a suspicion or reasonable belief

- All suspicions that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being abused must be taken seriously, including suspicions that the abuse is taking or may take place outside school grounds or areas. If your suspicion develops into a reasonable belief, you must act and refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

Receiving a disclosure about or from a current student

- All disclosures must be treated seriously. You should immediately refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

Receiving a disclosure about or from a former student

- If you receive a disclosure from a former student about historical abuse, you must act. If the former student is currently of school age and attending a Victorian school, you must immediately refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.
- If the former student is no longer of school age or attending a Victorian school, you must still report the disclosure to DFFH Child Protection.

5.11 Disclosures

It is the role of College staff members to reassure and support a child or young person who makes a disclosure of abuse, and to ensure that the disclosure is taken seriously. College staff members should never promise to keep any disclosures confidential, as all disclosures of abuse must be reported.

The role of College staff remains the same if disclosures are made by a parent/guardian/carer or a sibling, or if disclosures involve family violence.

For strategies on how to manage a disclosure, refer to *PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools*.

5.12 The Four Critical Actions - Making a report or referral –

School staff must be aware of and comply with their legal obligations with respect to reporting suspected child abuse and providing ongoing appropriate support.

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There are Four Critical Actions which must be taken when responding to and reporting a child abuse incident, disclosure or suspicion:

1. Responding to an Emergency
2. Reporting to Authorities
3. Contacting Parents/Carers
4. Providing Ongoing Support

Please refer to **APPENDIX A – Four Critical Actions for Schools – Responding to incidents, disclosures, and suspicions of child abuse.**

5.13 Reporting obligations

When making any report in regards to suspected child abuse, it is strongly recommended that you use the Responding to suspected child abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

Where a school staff member has reported a concern to Child Protection but they continue to have concerns for the child after Child Protection has closed the case, they may escalate the matter through Child Protection complaints management processes or reporting concerns to the Principal.

The College will take immediate steps to protect any child or student connected to a complaint or concern relating to child abuse. This may include increased supervision, changes to classroom or activity arrangements, provision of wellbeing support, and ensuring the child knows how to access help. Protective measures will be tailored to the individual needs of the child and reviewed regularly until the matter is resolved.

5.14 Record Keeping

All complaints, concerns, disclosures, and reports relating to child abuse will be documented in accordance with the College's recordkeeping policy and procedures. Records will include the nature of the concern, actions taken, communications with relevant parties, and outcomes. These records will be stored securely and retained in line with legal and regulatory requirements, ensuring confidentiality and integrity.

5.15 Child in need of therapeutic treatment

Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child over 10 but under 18 years of age has been exhibiting sexually abusive behaviours and may be in need of therapeutic treatment may make a report to Child Protection.

School staff must also report student sexual offending to the Victoria Police.

5.16 Significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child

All concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or unborn child) should be taken seriously and acted upon.

Any adult can make a referral to Child FIRST/The Orange Door if they:

- have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- the issue of concern has a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- the child's immediate safety is not compromised
- believe that the child and/or family will act on the referral and be supportive of it.

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School staff must contact Victoria Police if:

- there is any concern for a child's immediate safety and/or
- a child is partaking in any risk-taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child or any other person.

School staff can contact Child Protection if:

- after consideration of all available information you form a view that the child is in need of protection and
- you believe that the child's parents/carers will not be open to support from family services to address their child's wellbeing.

For contact details visit:

- [Child FIRST Child and family services](#)
- [The Orange Door](#)
- [The Lookout service directory](#) — for information, and guidance to help you respond to family violence
- [1800 RESPECT](#)— for family violence victims/survivors to be referred to counselling and information
- Child Protection — visit [Making a report to child protection](#)
- Victoria Police — call [000](#) or your local police station.

6. Referenced Documents and relevant Legislation

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

SEDA College (Victoria) Policies and Procedures:

- Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Record Keeping and Information Management Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy

Relevant Legislation:

- Ministerial Order 1359
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018 (Vic)
- The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)
- The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
- The Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)
- The Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)
- The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic.)
- The Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic.)
- Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse
- PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools

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7. Policy History

Version	Policy Owner	Approval Date	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
V1	Principal	20/06/2022	01/07/2022	New Policy
V2	Principal	30/11/2023	20/11/2023	<p>Added to definitions- sexual offenses, grooming, and serious emotional or psychological harm.</p> <p>Added references to 'reasonable belief,' the 'reportable conduct scheme,' and legal obligations related to grooming within Section 4 – Statement of Policy.</p> <p>Added sections, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, and 5.11.</p> <p>Within Section 5.6, added 'reasonable excuses' for not reporting sexual offenses, with a mention of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) and an explanation of the distinction between failure to disclose and mandatory reporting.</p> <p>Section 5.7 has added reference to the criminal offence associated with 'failure to protect.'</p> <p>Added 'Appendix A – Four Critical Actions' and incorporated relevant legislation into Section 6."</p>
V3	Principal	21/11/2024	21/11/2024	<p>Updated letterhead to reflect current address.</p> <p>Added the College Board as the approving Body.</p> <p>Added to definitions "Children & Young People". Updated Staff definition.</p>
V4	Principal	19/09/2025	19/09/2025	<p>Updated policy in response to VRQA rectification plan-</p> <p>Added reference to diversity and sensitivity to student characteristics to section 1.</p> <p>Clarified scope to include all persons connected to the school environment to section 1.</p> <p>Updated definition of grooming as per Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) into Section 5.3.</p> <p>Added requirement to disclose grooming related concerns to police as soon as practicable to Section 5.3.</p> <p>Section 5.7 revised to include definition and assessment criteria for substantial risk and added a statement that persons in authority must not negligently fail to reduce or remove the risk. Explicitly identified roles and responsibilities of staff and leadership to section 4</p>

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				Updated section 5.13 to outlining protective measures for children connected to complaints. Added Section 5.14 - Record Keeping
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APPENDIX A – Four Critical Actions for Schools

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

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

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.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

■ 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.

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

■ 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.

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/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.

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 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

