



## Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

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### Location

All Coburg High School policies are located under the 'Community' tab on Compass, sub-section 'School Documentation' and then 'Policies'.

### Language Opportunities



If you require this document to be translated into another language, please contact:

[info@coburg.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@coburg.vic.edu.au)

Se si richiede che questo documento sia tradotto in un'altra lingua, si prega di contattare:

[info@coburg.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@coburg.vic.gov.au)

Εάν ζητήσετε να μεταφραστεί αυτό το έγγραφο σε άλλη γλώσσα, επικοινωνήστε με την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση

[info@coburg.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@coburg.vic.edu.au)

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ को किसी अन्य भाषा में अनुवादित करने की आवश्यकता है, तो कृपया संपर्क करें:

[info@coburg.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@coburg.vic.edu.au)

اگر شما نیاز دارید که این سند به زبان دیگری ترجمه شود ، لطفاً با این آدرس تماس بگیرید: [info@coburg.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@coburg.vic.edu.au)

หากคุณต้องการแปลเอกสารนี้เป็นภาษาอื่นกรุณาติดต่อ: [info@coburg.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@coburg.vic.edu.au)

إذا كنت تريد ترجمة هذا المستند إلى لغة أخرى ، فيرجى الاتصال بـ: [info@coburg.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@coburg.vic.edu.au)

## Purpose

- The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures our school has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse and to ensure that all staff and members of our school 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, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school (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.

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

## Policy

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

### Information for students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any 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 Coburg High School they should start with their Coburg Connect teacher, Year Level Coordinator or a member of the Wellbeing team.

## 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
- follow the below procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure our school acts in the best interests of students and children and complies with both our legal and Department policy obligations.

At Coburg High School we recognise the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our school 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, Coburg High School 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.

### **School staff and volunteer responsibilities**

#### **1. Immediate action**

If a school 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 Assistant Principal of Student Engagement, Support and Management as soon as possible, who will ensure our school 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 the Assistant Principal of Student Engagement, Support and Management.
- If the Assistant Principal of Student Engagement, Support and Management is unavailable, the Wellbeing Leader will take on this role.
- If the concerns relates to the conduct of staff members referred to above], notify the Principal or the [relevant regional office](#) where the person nominated above is the principal who must then take on responsibility for ensuring our school follows these procedures.

#### **2. Reporting to authorities and referring to services**

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, the Assistant Principal of Student Engagement, Support and Management **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible.

The following steps will ensure our school complies with the four critical actions as well as additional actions required under the Child Safe Standards.

The Assistant Principal of Student Engagement, Support and Management 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 school or the designated member of school 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 Assistant Principal of Student Engagement, Support and Management 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 and Training Legal Division for advice on notifying parents and carers, and where relevant, the wider school community.

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

### **4. Ongoing protection and support**

The Assistant Principal of Student Engagement, Support and Management, and members of the Wellbeing Team and Student Support Executive 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 Assistant Principal of Student Engagement, Support and Management will ensure that:

- detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion are taken including, where possible, by the 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 school to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion
- all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including the schools immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely in Compass.
- processes are put in place to ensure that stored records remain confidential and provisions are put in place to review Compass access regularly

### For school visitors and school community members

All community members aged 18 years or over have legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse.

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 school 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 school, 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

### Communication

- This policy will be communicated to our school community via the website and on Compass under School Documentation.
- It is also included in staff induction processes and part of annual staff training.

## Further Information and Resources

The following Department of Education and Training policies and guidance 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 school policies are also relevant to this policy:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing 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

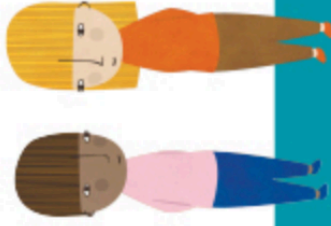
## Policy Review and Approval

Policy last reviewed	2024
Consultation	School Council (1 May 2024)
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	2026 or following a relevant child safety incident

## FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

# Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

# PROTECT



### 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 4 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 (eg. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- You must use the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

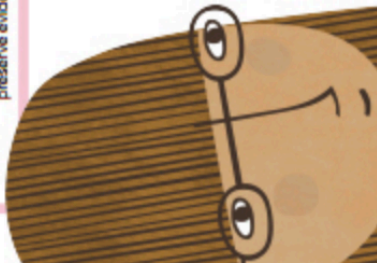
\*A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

## 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

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 or volunteer to Victoria Police.

You must also report internally to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
  - School Principal and/or leadership team
  - Employee Conduct Branch
  - DET Security Services Unit
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
  - School Principal and/or leadership team
  - Diocesan education office
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
  - School Principal and/or school chairperson

### 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

- You must also report to:
- School Principal and/or leadership team
  - DET Security Services Unit

#### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- You must also report to:
- School Principal and/or leadership team
  - Diocesan education office

#### INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- You must also report to:
- School Principal and/or chairperson

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 (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.

## 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 parent/carer (eg. 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).

## 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.

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 9777

South Division 1300 655 795

East Division 1300 360 391

West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599

West Division (Metrol) 1300 664 9777

##### AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends,

public holidays 13 12 78

CHILD FIRST

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

#### DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT

(03) 9589 6266

#### STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT

(03) 9637 2934

#### EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

(03) 9637 2595

#### DIOCESAN OFFICE

Melbourne (03) 9267 0228

Bairrat (03) 5337 7135

Salé (03) 9522 6600

Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377

#### INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

VICTORIA

(03) 9825 7200