

## Policy

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### Rationale

Kororoit Creek Primary School is committed to child safety and to our children to being principled, caring, balanced members of our community. We are committed to our children's safety, participation and empowerment and have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously. The school is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and all staff undertake Mandatory Reporting training.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers and are committed to the cultural safety and well-being of children from vulnerable and diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children.

### Aims

#### Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and tolerance in our school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children who are vulnerable or have a disability.

#### Our staff and volunteers

This policy informs our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct.

### Implementation

#### Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Where possible any concerns should be brought to the attention of the Principal or Assistant Principal. If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

For all jobs that require child connected work there will be an induction process providing explicit information about the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities and the school's child safety practices, including the Code of Conduct.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect all children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of vulnerable children or those with a disability.

#### Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ appropriately skilled people to work with children. We identify selection criteria through Recruitment Online which clearly demonstrates our commitment to child safety. The school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

*Kororoit Creek Primary School has a zero tolerance for any form of child abuse*

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](#) website. We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are addressing the person's suitability for the job and working with children. VIT registration is compulsory for all teaching staff and we require proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications.

### **Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting (Compass), appropriate filing including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. Refer to our Child Protection Policy for processes and procedures.

### **Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected and will disclose how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

### **Legislative responsibilities**

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- All personnel who have formed a belief that a child is at risk must comply with their duty and inform the Principal or Assistant Principal so that a mandatory report can be made.
- **Failure to disclose offence:** In addition to mandatory reporting and duty of care obligations, any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 17 must report 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 Child Protection or the child is over 17 when the belief is formed.
- **Failure to protect:** 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.

### **Risk management**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, swimming), and online environments.

### **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

The school takes all allegations seriously and works to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have formed a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

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If an adult has formed a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident to the Principal or Assistant Principal. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour
- a child or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- someone who knows the child or young person states that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused
- a child shows signs of being physically or sexually abused
- the staff member is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child or young person's safety, stability or development
- the staff member observes signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision
- a child's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

Refer to the following information for a guide on who or where to go if assistance is required.

## 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.

#### 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 (Metrol) **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**.



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Confidentiality is provided for reporters under the CYFA. The CYFA prevents disclosure of the name or any information likely to lead to the identification of a person who has made a report in accordance with legislation, except in specific circumstances.

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or family of the report
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed
- a court or tribunal decides that it is necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child
- a court or tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to attend court to provide evidence.

Information provided during a protective investigation may be used in a court report if the risks to the child or young person require the case to proceed to court. In these circumstances, the source of the information may be required to provide evidence to the court.

If Child Protection decides that the report is about a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child, they may refer the report to a community-based child and family service and disclose the identity of the reporter to that service. However, the CYFA provides that neither Child Protection nor the community-based child and family service may disclose the reporter's identity to any other person without the reporter's consent.

A failure by mandated professionals and staff members to report a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of physical or sexual abuse may result in the person being prosecuted and a court imposing a fine under the CYFA

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's annual review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019.