



CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING & REPORTING OBLIGATIONS POLICY

Purpose

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 Manchester Primary School. The specific procedures that are applicable at our school are contained at Appendix A.

Scope

This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities and services [such as Outside School Hours Care].

Policy

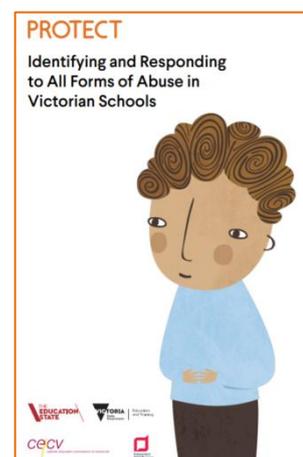
All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests.

Manchester Primary School 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

The staff at Manchester Primary School are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations. For detailed information about each obligation, please refer to

[Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).





https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf

At Manchester Primary School we also recognise the diversity of the children and young people at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety.

Mandatory Reporting

Principals, registered teachers, registered medical practitioners, nurses and all members of the police force are mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic).

[NOTE: as a result of changes to mandatory reporter groups, registered psychologists will be mandatory reporters from 1 March 2019, and then from 21 January 2020, school counsellors will also be mandatory reporters.]

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse, and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Manchester Primary School to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the principal does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module* annually. We also encourage all other staff to undertake this module, even where they are not mandatory reporters.

For more information about Mandatory Reporting see the Department's *Policy and Advisory Library - PAL*:

[Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations.](#)

Child in need of protection

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

The policy of the Department of Education and Training (DET) requires **all staff** who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to report their concerns to DHHS or Victoria Police, and discuss their concerns with the school leadership team.

For more information about making a report to DHHS Child Protection, see the Department's *Policy and Advisory Library*: [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal](#)



Obligations and Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

Four critical actions

Follow the four critical actions when responding to an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse:

Action 1: Respond to an emergency

Action 2: Report to authorities

Action 3: Contact parents or carers

Action 4: Provide on-going support

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

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 **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 parents/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-team>

ORANGE DOOR

<http://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 9537 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE

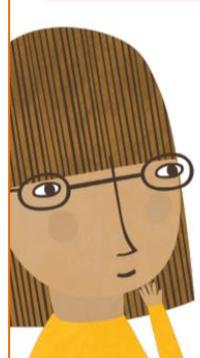
Melbourne **(03) 8287 0228**
 Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
 Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
 Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

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



Education
and Training



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 deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.*

CRITICAL ACTION 1: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is not 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.

CRITICAL ACTION 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 or volunteer 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.

CRITICAL 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/carers (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.

CRITICAL ACTION 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 services.

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

[Website](#)

ORANGE DOOR

[Website](#)

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

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to 1800 Respect for counselling, information and a referral service: 1800 737 732.



PROTECT

IDENTIFYING SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

CRITICAL INFORMATION

As a school staff member:

- it is critical to be able to recognise the physical or behavioural signs of child abuse (in many circumstances they may be the only indication that a child is subject to abuse)
- you may be the best-placed or only adult in a position to identify and respond to suspected abuse.

If indicators lead you to form a reasonable belief that a child is being abused, you must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#). These actions will support you to immediately report your suspicion to DHHS Child Protection, and/ or to Victoria Police.

Trigger warning

This section includes explicit descriptions of abuse and may be distressing to engage with for some staff members.

If you need to talk to someone it is recommended that you speak to your school leadership team about arranging appropriate support. You can also talk to your GP or another allied health professional.

Government school staff can also contact the Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 008.

As a school staff member, you play a critical role in protecting children from child abuse. In some cases you may be the best-placed, or only adult in a child's life who is in a position to identify and respond to signs that a:

- child is being abused, or is at risk of abuse
- school community member (including a school staff member) may be a perpetrator of child abuse.

This section will help you to understand the different types of abuse and recognise the possible physical and behavioural indicators of:

- [physical child abuse](#)
- child [sexual abuse](#)
- [grooming](#)
- [family violence](#)
- [emotional child abuse](#)
- [neglect](#).



When identifying child abuse, it is critical to remember that:

- some instances of child abuse will fall across multiple categories (i.e. family violence may involve physical, sexual and/or emotional child abuse)
- the trauma associated with child abuse can significantly impact upon the wellbeing and development of a child
- all concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child, or the conduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer must be acted upon as soon as possible.

If physical and/or behavioural indicators lead you to suspect that a child has or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, regardless of the type of abuse, you must respond as soon as practicable by following the [Four Critical Actions](#).

PHYSICAL CHILD ABUSE

CRITICAL INFORMATION

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

If you suspect that a child has been or is being physically abused, or is at risk of physical abuse, you must respond by following the [Four Critical Actions](#).

What is physical child abuse?

Physical child abuse can consist of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. Examples of physical abuse may include beating, shaking or burning, assault with implements and female genital mutilation.

PHYSICAL indicators of physical child abuse include (but are not limited to):

- bruises or welts on facial areas and other areas of the body, e.g. back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs
- bruises or welts in unusual configurations, or those that look like the object used to make the injury, e.g. fingerprints, handprints, buckles, iron or teeth
- burns from boiling water, oil or flames or burns that show the shape of the object used to make them, e.g. iron, grill, cigarette
- fractures of the skull, jaw, nose and limbs (especially those not consistent with the explanation offered, or the type of injury possible at the child's age of development)
- cuts and grazes to the mouth, lips, gums, eye area, ears and external genitalia
- bald patches where hair has been pulled out
- multiple injuries, old and new
- effects of poisoning
- internal injuries.



What are the behavioural indicators of physical child abuse?

BEHAVIOURAL indicators of physical child abuse include (but are not limited to):

- disclosure of an injury inflicted by someone else (parent, carer or guardian), or an inconsistent or unlikely explanation or inability to remember the cause of injury
- unusual fear of physical contact with adults
- aggressive behaviour
- disproportionate reaction to events
- wearing clothes unsuitable for weather conditions to hide injuries
- wariness or fear of a parent, carer or guardian
- reluctance to go home
- no reaction or little emotion displayed when being hurt or threatened
- habitual absences from school without reasonable explanation
- overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative
- unusually nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive and destructive to self and/or others
- poor sleeping patterns, fear of the dark or nightmares and regressive behaviour, e.g. bed-wetting
- drug or alcohol misuse, suicidal thoughts or self-harm.

Student fights

Please note that physical harm may also be caused by student fights and/or bullying. For further information on this see online advice below.

For online advice

- on bullying please visit [Bully Stoppers](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx):
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx>
- on student fights visit:
 - [Intervention in School Fights](#) (government schools)
 - Catholic Schools - Archdiocese of Melbourne search for Student Behaviour Guidelines - Policy 2.26 Pastoral Care of Students at www.cem.edu.au.

Government schools can contact the DET Security Services Unit on (03) 9589 6266 to report a student fight and for advice on an appropriate response.

Catholic schools can also contact their Diocesan education office, specifically:

- Archdiocese of Melbourne: Student Wellbeing Information Line on (03) 9267 0228.
- Diocese of Sale: Executive Manager Industrial Relations/Human Resources on (03) 5622 6600
- Diocese of Ballarat: Student Wellbeing on (03) 5337 7135
- Diocese of Sandhurst: Consultant: Pastoral Wellbeing on (03) 5443 2377.

Independent Schools can contact Independent Schools Victoria on (03) 9825 7200.



CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

CRITICAL INFORMATION

Child sexual abuse:

- is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity
- can include a wide range of sexual activity and can include exposing a child to pornography
- does not always involve physical contact or force.

You must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) if you suspect that a:

- child has been or is being sexually abused, or is at risk of sexual abuse
- school staff member, contractor or volunteer may be engaging, or are at risk of engaging in sexual behaviour with a child/children.

Unwanted sexual behaviour toward a student by a child 10 years or over can constitute a sexual offence and is referred to as student-to-student sexual offending. All incidents, suspicions and disclosures of student sexual offending must be responded to by following the [Four Critical Actions](#).

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse:

- is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity
- can include a wide range of sexual activity including fondling the child's genitals, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.

Child sexual abuse may not always include physical sexual contact and can also include non-contact offences, for example:

- talking to a child in a sexually explicit way
- sending sexual messages or emails to a child
- exposing a sexual body part to a child
- forcing a child to watch a sexual act (including showing pornography to a child)
- having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner (including child sexual exploitation).

Child sexual abuse does not always involve force. In some circumstances a child may be manipulated into believing that they have brought the abuse on themselves, or that the abuse is an expression of love, through a process of grooming.



What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is also a form of sexual abuse where offenders use their power (physical, financial or emotional) over a child to sexually or emotionally abuse them.

It often involves situations and relationships where young people receive something (food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money etc.) in return for participating in sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur in person or online, and sometimes the child may not even realise they are a victim.

Who is most at risk of child sexual abuse?

Any child can be victim to sexual abuse, however children who are vulnerable, isolated and/or have a disability are much more likely to become victims, and are disproportionately abused.

Who are the common perpetrators of child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is most commonly perpetrated by someone who is known to, and trusted by the child, and often someone highly trusted within their families, communities, schools and/or other institutions. See advice on [identifying perpetrators of child sexual abuse](#).

Perpetrators can include (but are not limited to):

- a family member (this is known as intra family abuse and can include sibling abuse)
- a school staff member, coach or other carer
- a peer/child 10 years or more in age*
- a family friend or stranger via a forced marriage (where a student is subject to a marriage without their consent, arranged for by their immediate or extended family - this constitutes a criminal offence and must be reported).

**Unwanted sexual behaviour toward a student by a person 10 years or over can constitute a sexual offence and is referred to as student-to-student sexual offending.*

Please note that a child who is under 10 years of age is not considered capable of committing an offence. Any suspected sexual behaviours by children under 10 is referred to as problem sexual behaviour.

What are the physical and behavioural indicators of child sexual abuse?

PHYSICAL indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- injury to the genital or rectal area, e.g. bruising, bleeding, discharge, inflammation or infection
- injury to areas of the body such as breasts, buttocks or upper thighs
- discomfort in urinating or defecating
- presence of foreign bodies in the vagina and/or rectum
- sexually-transmitted diseases
- frequent urinary tract infections



- pregnancy, especially in very young adolescents
- anxiety-related illnesses, e.g. anorexia or bulimia.

BEHAVIOURAL indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- disclosure of sexual abuse, either directly (from the alleged victim) or indirectly (by a third person or allusion)
- persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity, e.g. excessive masturbation or rubbing genitals against adults
- drawings or descriptions in stories that are sexually explicit and not age-appropriate
- fear of home, specific places or particular adults
- poor/deteriorating relationships with adults and peers
- poor self-care or personal hygiene
- complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea without physiological basis
- sleeping difficulties
- regressive behaviour, e.g. bed-wetting or speech loss
- depression, self-harm, drug or alcohol abuse, or attempted suicide
- sudden decline in academic performance, poor memory and concentration
- engaging in sex work and/or sexual risk-taking behaviour
- wearing layers of clothing to hide injuries and bruises.

How can I identify perpetrators of child sexual abuse?

In addition to identifying the physical and behavioural signs of abuse within children, you can play a critical role in identifying signs that a member of the school community may be engaging in child sexual abuse, or grooming a child for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity.

Most critically you must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) if you:

- feel uncomfortable about the way an adult interacts with one or more children
- suspect that the adult may be engaging in sexual abuse of one or more children
- suspect that the adult is grooming the child/children for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity
- reasonably believe that the adult is at risk of sexual activity with one or more children.

You must report suspected abuse, or risk of abuse regardless of any concerns about the risk to the reputation of the suspected perpetrator or school. A failure to report can result in criminal charges and your report could prove critical to protecting children in your care.



What are the behavioural indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse?

In many cases the signs that an adult is sexually abusing a child, or grooming a child with the intent of sexually abusing them may not be obvious. However there are a number of signs to look for.

BEHAVIOURAL indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

Family member (adult)

- attempts by one parent to alienate their child from the other parent
- overprotective or volatile relationship between the child and one of their parents/ family members
- reluctance by the child to be alone with one of their parents/family members.

Family member (sibling)

- the child and a sibling behaving like they are in an intimate relationship
- reluctance by the child to be alone with a sibling
- embarrassment by siblings if they are found alone together.

School staff member, coach or other carer

- touching a child inappropriately
- bringing up sexual material or personal disclosures into conversations with a student/s
- inappropriately contacting the student/s, e.g. calls, emails, texts, social media
- obvious or inappropriate preferential treatment of the student/s (making them feel “special”)
- giving of gifts to a student/s
- having inappropriate social boundaries, e.g. telling the potential victims about their own personal problems etc.
- offering to drive a student/s to or from school
- inviting themselves over to their homes, calling them at night
- befriending the parents themselves and making visits to their home
- undermining the child’s reputation (so that the child won’t be believed).



GROOMING

CRITICAL INFORMATION

- Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual abuse at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.
- If you suspect that a child is being groomed, you must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).

What is grooming?

Grooming is a criminal offence and occurs when an adult engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual abuse at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.

Sometimes it is hard to see when someone is being groomed until after they have been sexually abused, because some grooming behaviour can look like “normal” caring behaviour.

Examples of grooming behaviours may include:

- giving gifts or special attention to a child or their parent or carer (this can make a child feel special or indebted to an adult)
- controlling a child through threats, manipulation, force or use of authority (this can make a child fearful to report unwanted behaviour)
- making close physical contact, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling
- openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault).

What is online grooming?

Grooming includes online grooming. It occurs when an adult uses electronic communication (including social media) in a predatory fashion to try to lower a child’s inhibitions, or heighten their curiosity regarding sex, with the aim of eventually meeting them in person for the purposes of sexual activity. This can include online chats, sexting, and other interactions. Any incidents of suspected grooming must be reported by following the follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).

Online grooming can also precede online child exploitation, a form of child exploitation where adults use the internet or a mobile to communicate sexual imagery with or of a child (e.g. via a webcam). Any incidents of suspected child exploitation must be reported.

For more information about:

- online grooming please visit [here](#)
- sexting and the transmission of sexual images between students please visit [here](#).



What are the behavioural indicators that a child may be subject to grooming?

BEHAVIOURAL indicators that a child may be subject to grooming include (but are not limited to):

- developing an unusually close connection with an older person
- displaying mood changes (hyperactive, secretive, hostile, aggressive, impatient, resentful, anxious, withdrawn, depressed)
- using street/different language; copying the way the new 'friend' may speak; talking about the new 'friend' who does not belong to his/ her normal social circle
- possessing jewellery, clothing or expensive items given by the 'friend'
- possessing large amounts of money which he/she cannot account for
- using a new mobile phone (given by the 'friend') excessively to make calls, videos or send text messages
- being excessively secretive about their use of communications technologies, including social media
- frequently staying out overnight, especially if the relationship is with an older person
- being dishonest about where they've been and whom they've been with
- using drugs; physical evidence includes spoons, silver foil, 'tabs', 'rocks'
- assuming a new name; being in possession of a false ID, stolen passport or driver's license provided by the 'friend' to avoid detection
- being picked up in a car by the 'friend' from home/school or 'down the street'.

See [Behavioural indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse](#) for information on the indicators to look for in suspected perpetrators.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

CRITICAL INFORMATION

- Family violence can include physical violence or threats, verbal abuse, emotional and physical abuse, sexual abuse and financial and social abuse.
- If you suspect that a child is exposed to family violence (including witnessing family violence), or is at risk of family violence you must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).

What is family violence?

The *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) defines family violence as behaviour by a person towards a family member where the behaviour:

- is physically or sexually abusive
- is emotionally or psychologically abusive
- is economically abusive
- is threatening or coercive OR



- in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person.

A child can be the victim to any of these behaviours. Family violence also includes behaviour that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, any of these behaviours.

A child or young person might be a victim of family violence in the following ways:

- being hit, yelled at, or otherwise directly abused
- being injured
- being sexually abused
- experiencing fear for self
- experiencing fear for another person, a pet or belongings
- seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing violence directed against another person
- seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing the aftermath of violence (such as broken furniture, smashed crockery, an atmosphere of tension)
- knowing or sensing that a family member is in fear
- being told to do something (such as to be quiet or to 'behave') to prevent violence
- being blamed for not preventing violence
- attempting to prevent or minimise violence
- attempting to mediate between the perpetrator and another family member
- being threatened or co-opted by the perpetrator into using violent behaviour against another family member
- being co-opted into supporting the perpetrator or taking their side
- being isolated or socially marginalised in ways that are directly attributable to the perpetrator's controlling behaviours.

Family violence is predominantly (although not always) perpetrated by men against women and children.

Children most commonly experience family violence through a partner or ex-partner of the mother. A child (or children) may also be the target of the behaviour (including a direct or indirect attack on the mother-child relationship), or may witness the behaviours, or the effects of the behaviours.

Family violence can have devastating impacts on children

Experiences of family violence create significant risks to a child's social, emotional, psychological and physical health and wellbeing. The longer a child experiences family violence, the greater the impact can be.



Action must be taken to protect the child, and to limit their trauma and support their recovery. As a school staff member you may be in the best position to identify that a child may be experiencing family violence and to take steps to protect the child by following the [Four Critical Actions](#).

Family violence in our communities

Unfortunately the incidence of family violence is high. Family violence is one of the most significant and serious issues facing our communities, with a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of many Victorians.

It occurs within all social, cultural and economic groups, although some groups experience greater barriers to accessing help and support. Women are particularly vulnerable to family violence during pregnancy. Family violence does not necessarily end if the relationship ends. In fact the family violence may not only continue, but may increase in frequency and severity (especially during the period where action is taken to leave or end the relationship).

Victoria's Plan for Change

The Victorian Government is implementing ALL of the 227 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence (see [Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change](#)), including the implementation of the [Respectful Relationships initiative](#) in Victorian Schools.

How can family violence be identified?

Family violence can be difficult to identify. Victims of family violence, including children often become very adept at hiding their distress, often as a coping and safety strategy. The following sections outline some of the key physical and behavioural indicators of family violence in children.

These indicators are drawn from the [Department of Health and Human Services' Common Risk Assessment Framework for family violence](#). Please note that the Framework is currently being updated in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence – an updated Framework is expected to be released by mid-2018.

What are the physical indicators of family violence?

PHYSICAL indicators of family violence in children include (but are not limited to):

- speech disorders
- delays in physical development
- failure to thrive (without an organic cause)
- bruises, cuts or welts on facial areas, and other parts of the body including back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs
- any bruises or welts (old or new) in unusual configurations, or those that look like the object used to make the injury (such as fingerprints, handprints, buckles, iron or teeth)
- fractured bones, especially in an infant where a fracture is unlikely to have occurred accidentally



- poisoning
- internal injuries.

What are the behavioural indicators of family violence?

BEHAVIOURAL indicators of family violence include (but are not limited to):

- violent/aggressive behaviour and language
- depression and anxiety and suicidal thoughts
- appearing nervous and withdrawn, including wariness or distrust of adults
- difficulty adjusting to change
- psychosomatic illness
- bedwetting and sleeping disorders
- 'acting out', such as cruelty to animals
- extremely demanding, attention-seeking behaviour
- participating in dangerous risk-taking behaviours to impress peers
- overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative behaviour
- taking on a caretaker role prematurely, trying to protect other family members
- embarrassment about family
- demonstrated fear of parents, carers or guardians, and of going home
- disengagement from school (absenteeism, lateness and/or school refusal) and/or poor academic outcomes
- parent-child conflict
- wearing long-sleeved clothes on hot days in an attempt to hide bruising or other injury
- becoming fearful when other children cry or shout
- being excessively friendly to strangers.

For older children and young people indicators can also include:

- moving away/running away from home
- entering a relationship early to escape the family home
- entering into other violent and/or unsafe relationships
- involvement in risk taking and/or unlawful activity
- alcohol and substance misuse.

For more information about family violence please visit [here](#).

Identifying family violence in parents/carers

As a school staff member you will likely have contact with a child's parents/carers. Through interactions with parents and carers you may identify signs, or receive a disclosure that a



child is experiencing family violence (noting that if a parent is experiencing family violence, it is highly likely that their child is also impacted).

You should always respond to any reasonable suspicion or belief that a child may be experiencing family violence by following the [Four Critical Actions](#).

Key indicators that a family member is experiencing violence include:

- nervous, ashamed or evasive behaviour
- describing their partner as controlling or prone to anger
- appearing to be uncomfortable or anxious in the presence of their partner
- being accompanied by their partner, who does most of the talking
- having physical signs of violence such as bruising
- giving an unconvincing explanation of injuries that they (or their child) have sustained
- suffering anxiety, panic attacks, stress and/or depression.

Some alleged perpetrators of family violence may also be subject to court orders, including Family Violence Intervention Orders.

Details on Family Violence Intervention Orders can be found [here](#).

EMOTIONAL CHILD ABUSE

CRITICAL INFORMATION

- Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats.
- If you suspect that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm, you must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).

What is emotional abuse?

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

It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, and persistent coldness from a person, to the extent that the child suffers, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm to their physical or developmental health.

What are the physical and behavioural indicators of emotional child abuse?

PHYSICAL indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):



- speech disorders such as language delay, stuttering or selectively being mute (only speaking with certain people or in certain situations)
- delays in emotional, mental or physical development.

BEHAVIOURAL indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):

- overly compliant, passive and undemanding behaviour
- extremely demanding, aggressive and attention-seeking behaviour or anti-social and destructive behaviour
- low tolerance or frustration
- poor self-image and low self-esteem
- unexplained mood swings, depression, self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- behaviours that are not age-appropriate, e.g. overly adult, or overly infantile
- fear of failure, overly high standards, and excessive neatness
- poor social and interpersonal skills
- violent drawings or writing
- lack of positive social contact.

NEGLECT

CRITICAL INFORMATION

- Serious 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.
- If you suspect that a child is experiencing serious neglect, you must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).
- If you are concerned that a child may be experiencing neglect that is not “serious” you should refer the family to local community based services as appropriate (see [Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Child](#)) **UNLESS** the suspected neglect is committed in the school, where you should follow the actions detailed [below](#).

What is neglect?

Neglect includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision.

In some circumstances the neglect of a child:



- can place the child's immediate safety and development at serious risk, or
- may not immediately compromise the safety of the child, but is likely to result in longer term cumulative harm.

The law differentiates between three different levels of neglect:

- 'Minor' neglect is low-level neglect that is trivial or temporary
- 'Significant' neglect is medium-level neglect that causes harm to a child that is more than trivial or temporary
- 'Serious' neglect is the highest level of neglect. It involves the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

Please **see below** for guidance on what actions to take for each level of neglect.

Neglect committed by school staff, volunteers and contractors

Neglect of a child can be committed by parents or carers, but it can also be committed by those that work within the school, such as teachers, school staff, contractors or volunteers. Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, a principal must notify the Employee Conduct Branch if school staff, contractors or volunteers engage in neglectful conduct that is 'significant'. This covers significant neglect that occurs within the school environment, as well as significant neglect by staff, contractors or volunteers that happens outside the school. That means that neglect by school members that is either significant or serious must be reported to the Employee Conduct Branch under the scheme.

Regardless of whether they are 'serious' or 'significant', concerns that a child is experiencing neglect must be responded to. The below table provides guidance for principals on how to report neglect, depending on the severity.

Minor/low levels of neglect

Committed by school staff, volunteers or contractors

Actions

Manage locally

If unsure or concerned, principals can seek advice from:

- Employee Conduct Branch (government schools)
- Diocesan Office (Catholic schools, see below).

Examples

- A child is accidentally left out in the rain and cold for a short period of time
- A teacher forgets to supervise a particular area of the school grounds for half an hour, and no harm comes to the children there.

Committed by other community members



Actions

Manage locally

- Refer child and family to local community based services if appropriate.
- Refer child and family to Child FIRST/Orange Door if appropriate.

Examples

- A carer fails to give a child pain medication for a minor headache
- A parent forgets to provide a child with their lunch on a single occasion.

Significant/medium levels of neglect

Committed by school staff, volunteers or contractors

Actions

If appropriate, refer child and family to local community based services.

Refer child and family to Child FIRST/Orange Door.

Principal to notify:

- Employee Conduct Branch (government schools)
- Diocesan Office (Catholic schools, see below).

If a principal remains concerned for a child's welfare, they can follow the Four Critical Actions.

Examples

- A first aid officer fails to examine or treat a child's bleeding cuts and bruises from falling over at school
- A teacher's 5 year old child (who does not attend the school) is seen playing near a busy highway on several occasions without adult supervision.

Committed by other community members

Actions

If appropriate, refer child and family to local community based services.

Refer child and family to Child FIRST/Orange Door.

If a principal remains concerned for a child's welfare, they can follow the Four Critical Actions.

Examples

- A carer leaves an 8 year old child alone for hours without supervision
- A parent does not provide their child with fresh clothes for a week at a time
- A carer consistently forgets to give a child prescribed medication for the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.



Serious/high levels of neglect

Committed by school staff, volunteers or contractors

Actions

Follow the Four Critical Actions, including reporting to:

- Victoria Police
- Employee Conduct Branch (government schools)
- DET Security Services Unit (government schools)
- Diocesan Education Office (Catholic schools, see below).

Examples

- A teacher is overheard saying that he frequently gets his 6 year old child to look after his 12 month old when he goes out for drinks for hours after work
- A staff member responsible for providing anticonvulsant medication to a child with epilepsy on a week-long school camp fails to do so for the entire week.

Committed by other community members

Actions

Follow the Four Critical Actions, including reporting to:

- DHHS Child Protection
- DET Security Services Unit (government schools).

Examples

- A carer allows a child in their care to inject illegal drugs in their home and does not intervene
- A parent regularly does not provide warm clothing or closed shoes for a child during winter
- A child's home environment is filthy or hazardous and there is animal or human faeces or urine, and decomposing food in the house.

What are the physical and behavioural indicators of neglect?

PHYSICAL indicators of neglect include (but are not limited to):

- appearing consistently dirty and unwashed
- being consistently inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
- being at risk of injury or harm due to consistent lack of adequate supervision from parents
- being consistently hungry, tired and listless
- having unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care
- having inadequate shelter and unsafe or unsanitary conditions.



BEHAVIOURAL indicators of neglect include (but are not limited to):

- gorging when food is available or inability to eat when extremely hungry
- begging for or stealing food
- appearing withdrawn, listless, pale and weak
- aggressive behaviour, irritability
- involvement in criminal activity
- little positive interaction with parent, carer or guardian
- poor socialising habits
- excessive friendliness towards strangers
- indiscriminate acts of affection
- poor, irregular or non-attendance at school
- staying at school for long hours and refusing or being reluctant to go home
- self-destructive behaviour
- taking on an adult role of caring for parent.

At Manchester Primary School we also encourage all staff to make a referral to Child FIRST when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST see the School Policy and Advisory Guide: [Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](#).

When to report wellbeing concerns to Child FIRST/Orange Door

[Child FIRST/Orange Door](#) ^{LS} (Family Information, Referral and Support Team) is a community-based referral point into Family Services.

In addition to reporting suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, you should make a referral to Child FIRST/Orange Door if:

- you have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- your concerns have a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- the child's immediate safety is not compromised
- you/your school has discussed the referral with the family and they are supportive of it.

Examples of concerns that school staff should report to Child FIRST/Orange Door include instances when a child's care or development is significantly impacted on by:

- parenting problems
- pressure due to a family member's physical/ mental illness, substance abuse, or disability
- vulnerability due to youth, isolation or lack of support
- significant social or economic disadvantage.





Reportable Conduct

Our school must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (9637 2594) if we become aware of an allegation of 'reportable conduct'.

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has formed a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- behaviour causing significant emotional or physical harm to a child;
- significant neglect of a child; or
- misconduct involving any of the above.

The Department, through the Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

Our principal must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former teachers, contractors, volunteers (including parents), allied health staff and school council employees.

If school staff become aware of reportable conduct by any person in the above positions, they should notify the school principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the principal, they should notify the Regional Director.

For more information about Reportable Conduct see the Department's *Policy and Advisory Library PAL*: [Reportable Conduct](#).

Failure to disclose offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (ie persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 years or over.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000 or local police station) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. 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 when:

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

"Reasonable excuse" is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed, for example, through a mandatory report to DHHS Child Protection.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department's *Policy and Advisory Library PAL*: [Failure to disclose offence](#).

Failure to protect offence

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult (ie persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department's *Policy and Advisory Library PAL*: [Failure to protect offence](#).

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic). 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. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.

For more information about this offence and reporting obligations see: [Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#).



Further Information and Resources

MINISTERIAL ORDER NO. 870 - CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

All Victorian schools must comply with *Ministerial Order No. 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools* in order to be registered, and remain registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

The Order came into effect on 1 August 2016 and specifies how every Victorian school must:

- embed a culture of 'no tolerance' for child abuse
- comply with the prescribed seven minimum Child Safe Standards.

In meeting the requirements of the Order, schools must be inclusive of the needs of all children, particularly students who are vulnerable due to age, family circumstances, abilities, or indigenous, cultural or linguistic background.

This resource will support schools to meet their obligations under the Order (Standard 5 - Section 11), by assisting them to develop clear procedures for responding to allegations of suspected abuse.

School governing authorities (which includes government school councils, principals and nominated school leaders) will have responsibility for ensuring that schools meet all of the obligations set out within the Order



Further Information and Resources

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Child Safety Principles

Manchester Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We achieve this by maintaining a child safe school environment which is guided by our school values.

The values which Manchester adhere to is **RESPECT**. Respect for self, others, the environment and for learning and achievement. The following reflects how we relate to one another in our learning community.

- **Respect Yourself**– having regard for self in terms of physical, social and emotional health.
- **Respect Others**– Mutual Respect and acceptance of others, their property and their differences. **Demonstrating Attentive Listening** and empathy for each person’s Right to Participate or their Right to Pass.
- **Respect our Environment** – recognising that we are the caretakers of the planet and that we must act responsibly and urgently to reverse mankind’s ecological footprint.
- **Respect for Achievement and Learning** – pursuing excellence and displaying pride and satisfaction in individual achievement and endeavour. Producing only **Personal Best** and showing **Appreciation** when that is achieved.

This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. Manchester Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse. Manchester Primary is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Koori children and any refugee children as well as children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability. Every person involved in Manchester Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Every person involved in Manchester Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.



Further Information and Resources

- Child Safe Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- **SWPBS** School Wide Positive Behaviour Support – Manchester Primary School
- Duty of Care Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

 [Responding to suspected child abuse: template](#) •

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/health/protectrecordingtemplate.docx>

 [Responding to student sexual offending: template](#) •

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/SSO_ReportingTemplate.docx



Further Information and Resources

APPENDIX A

CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING and REPORTING PROCEDURES at MANCHESTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

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 Manchester Primary School they should start with their teacher.
- For further information, please refer to Manchester Primary School Child Safety Policy

Managing disclosures made by students

When managing a disclosure you should:

- listen to the student and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you").



When managing a disclosure you should AVOID:

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).

General procedures

Our school will follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (Four Critical Actions) when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

All staff at our school who believe that a child is in need of protection, even if it doesn't meet the threshold required for mandatory reporting or the staff member is not a mandatory reporter, should in the first instance, speak to the child's class teacher or Assistant Principal or Principal or should make the required reports to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police as necessary.

At our school the Business Manager and Principal will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

Reporting suspicions, disclosures or incidents of child abuse

Responsibilities of all school staff

If a school staff member reasonably suspects or witnesses an incident of child abuse or receives a disclosure of child abuse, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid and call 000.
- Speak to the class teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal as soon as possible, who will follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure, including date and time of the report. It is recommended to use: [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#)



and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in the front administration office.

- If the staff member is a mandatory reporter and reasonably believes that a student has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse from which the child's parents have not protected the child, they must make a report to DHHS Child Protection.
- If the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been against a child, they must make a report to Victoria Police.

In circumstances where a member of the leadership team disagrees that a report needs to be made, but the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that the child is in need of protection and/or has been the victim of sexual abuse, the staff member must still contact DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police to make the report.

Responsibilities of the Assistant Principal or Principal

The Assistant Principal or Principal is responsible for promptly managing the school's response to an incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the incident, suspicion or disclosure is taken seriously. The Assistant Principal or Principal is also responsible for responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.

If the Assistant Principal or Principal receives a report from a school staff member or member of the school community of a suspicion, disclosure or incident of child abuse, they must:

- Follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) as soon as possible, including:
 - Responding to an emergency
 - Reporting to authorities/referring to services
 - Contacting parents/carers and
 - Providing ongoing support.
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure, including actions taken using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in the front administration office. They are also responsible for ensuring that any staff member who reported the incident, disclosure or suspicion to them also makes and keeps notes of the incident.
- At Manchester Primary School, the Assistant Principal or Principal will be responsible for ensuring that there is a prompt response to the disclosure and that the child is appropriately supported.

If the Assistant Principal or Principal is unavailable, the Business Manager will take on the role and responsibilities described in this section.



Duty of care and ongoing support for students

Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students. All staff must ensure that the classroom teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal or Business Manager is aware of any incidents, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible after they occur. This will allow appropriate supports to be put in place for the student affected.

For school visitors, volunteers and school community members

All community members aged 18 years or over should be aware of their legal obligations – see *Failure to disclose offence* above, in this Policy.

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details see the Four Critical Actions https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

Note: *There is no requirement for community members to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to DHHS Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, and where disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.*

Child Safety Responding & Reporting Obligations Policy Review

This policy was updated on:

Date: October 2021

Evaluation and Review: October 2024

Consultation with School Council:

Meeting # 499