

Bridgewood Primary School



Standard 1: Child Safety and Effective Leadership

The child safe standards require schools to have strategies to embed a school culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements. Protecting children from abuse is everybody's business, and a school's leadership is essential to instilling a child safety culture.

Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council.

Leadership in a child safe environment

Working with children can be very rewarding, and it brings additional responsibilities.

We must act to protect children from abuse and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This requires a culture of child safety to be embedded throughout Bridgewood Primary School so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. Such a culture is achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours of an organisation.

A child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. Bridgewood Primary School fosters a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

All staff and volunteers consider the safety of all children, and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.¹

Governance in a child safe environment

Leadership takes preventative, proactive and participatory approaches to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children at Bridgewood Primary School are paramount and given consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices.

Leadership responsibilities

Leadership and school council are responsible for embedding a culture of child safety at Bridgewood Primary School. Leadership takes the lead in protecting children from abuse and is made aware of child abuse allegations and risks and takes responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

Bridgewood Primary School ensures that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.

Identify and analyse risk of abuse

Bridgewood Primary School adopts an approach to prevent, detect and respond to child abuse risks. This includes a risk management strategy and policy that sets out how we identify, assess and the steps taken to reduce or remove child abuse risks.

¹ For definitions of key terms, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)
<www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>.

Develop a child safe policy

Bridgewood Primary School has developed a child safe policy which outlines our commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

Develop codes of conduct

Bridgewood Primary School has a code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children.

We also refer to professional codes of conduct where appropriate ie. DET and VIT documents.

Choose suitable employees and volunteers

Bridgewood Primary School takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This includes police record and identity checks, Working with Children Checks where required, face-to-face interviews and detailed reference checks from previous employers.

Support, train, supervise and enhance performance

Bridgewood Primary School ensures that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to help protect children from abuse. The Principal or her delegate are persons in our school who have knowledge of child safety issues and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of abuse.

Promote inclusion

Bridgewood Primary School is inclusive to all children and families. We have a culture that supports:

- cultural safety for Aboriginal children, for example by working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations
- cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, for example by using inclusive language and images in policy documents and communications such as the website and newsletters
- the safety of children with a disability, for example by ensuring our organisation is accessible to everyone and ensuring appropriate training and supervision of staff and volunteers working with children with a disability.

Empower and promote the participation of children in decision-making

Bridgewood Primary School promotes the involvement and participation of children in developing and maintaining child safe environments. For example, we provide opportunities for children to express their views on our child safe policy and code of conduct and then incorporate this feedback to improve our policies and practices. Ideas from children are sought through suggestion boxes, emails or feedback sessions.

We listen to children and take them seriously, particularly if they are disclosing abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of other children.

Community information

Bridgewood Primary School will keep the community up to date with child safety information. We will do this using a variety of strategies including newsletter items, special bulletins, information on the school's website, at parent information sessions, posters around the school and/or at individual parent meetings.

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Standard 2: Child Safety Policy / Statement

Bridgewood Primary school's commitment to child safety

Bridgewood Primary School is committed to child safety.

- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Bridgewood Primary School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Bridgewood Primary School has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Bridgewood Primary School is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

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

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school.

- We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.
- We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.
- We promote diversity and tolerance in school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides 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 which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

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.

Training and supervision

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

Our 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. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

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

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

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](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

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 and safety concerns in the Principal's office and take appropriate steps to follow up with DHHS.

Privacy

All personal information 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. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our school takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.²
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our school will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.³
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.⁴

Risk management

In Victoria, schools 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, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every four years and following significant incidents if they occur.

We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute.

Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

² A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

³ Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

⁴ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work 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 a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

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Standard 3: Staff Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers and board members of Bridgewood Primary School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of Bridgewood Primary School are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to **Bridgewood Primary School's** child safety policy / statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, having a zero tolerance of discrimination
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Principal or delegate and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to the Principal or delegate
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure, as quickly as possible, that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant school activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.
- reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps.)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes

- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family outside of our school without the Principal's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate)
- have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example providing families with e-newsletters)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the Principal or parents. All staff need to be aware of the students in their care who do not have media signed consent from parents
- work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- consume alcohol or drugs at school

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Principal or delegate of **Bridgewood Primary School**.

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

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

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Standard 4: Child Safety – Human Resource Practices

Overview

It is important for schools to have strong human resource practices to help protect children from abuse.

Bridgewood Primary School will foster a culture of openness and inclusiveness, as well as be aware that people who may wish to harm children could target specific schools. Robust human resource practices are a good way of reducing these risks. Human resource practices include the recruitment, training and supervision of all personnel.

To achieve this, Bridgewood Primary School will provide opportunities for employees and volunteers to develop and maintain skills to ensure child safety. This will support staff and volunteers to understand the importance of child safety and wellbeing, and enable them to consistently follow child safety policies and procedures.

Child Safety Officer

Employees and volunteers will be supported through the Principal and/or delegate, who are the designated persons to hear or be informed about all allegations or concerns, and provide support to other personnel. This will assist Bridgewood Primary School in ensuring that child safety is prioritised and that any allegations of abuse or safety concerns are recorded and responded to consistently and in line with legal requirements, school policies / statements and procedures.

The designated persons also provide contact for children, parents and employees/volunteers to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children associated with Bridgewood Primary School.

Recruitment

DET recruitment processes will be adhered to including taking all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children for have a current WWC certificate. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

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](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Training and Induction

Training and education is an important tool to help people understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Employees and volunteers (in addition to parents/guardians and children) need to be supported to discuss child protection issues and to detect signs of potential child abuse.

Staff will receive induction and ongoing training. New staff will be supported and informed when they begin their new role, and existing staff might need to develop new skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of their positions and expand their career options.

Training and support also promotes an awareness of the appropriate standards of care required to be met by employees and volunteers to ensure that the school meets its duty of care when providing services to children.

It is essential that our staff commit to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, for example by signing our school's code of conduct. Training should enhance the skills and knowledge of our employees and volunteers, and reduce exposure to risks.

Employees and volunteers working with children will receive training in the following areas:

- identifying, assessing and reducing or removing child abuse risks
- understanding our policies and procedures (including the code of conduct and child safe policy)
- knowledge of legislative requirements, such as obligations to report child abuse⁵, reduce and remove known risks of child abuse⁶, and to hold Working with Children Checks⁷ where required
- how to handle a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, including our organisation's reporting guidelines
- cultural awareness training.

Training can be formal such as:

- higher education training and accreditation
- training offered by external organisations
- training developed and delivered internally
- online 'Mandatory Reporting' unit
- induction training

Training can also be informal such as:

- inviting other professionals to speak at meetings or functions

⁵ The failure to disclose criminal offence requires adults in Victoria to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so). More information about [failure to disclose](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting obligations. Certain professionals are mandatory reporters, meaning they are required to report to the Department of Health and Human Services if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical and sexual abuse. More information about [mandatory reporting](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting) is available in the *Child protection manual* <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting>.

⁶ The failure to protect criminal offence applies to people within organisations who knew of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so. More information about [failure to protect](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

⁷ For more information about [Working with Children checks](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) visit the working with children website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au>.

- inviting local Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and community members to speak at meetings and events
- inviting local culturally and/or linguistically diverse community members to speak at meetings and events
- internal mentoring and coaching.

Supervision

Supervision of employees and volunteers will be managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. For instance, where practical, two staff members should be present during activities with children. In particular, children with a disability may require additional supervision.

As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs should be reported through appropriate channels, including the school's internal reporting procedures (such as the Principal and / or delegate), the Department of Health and Human Services (child protection), or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

Performance and development review

A proactive performance development strategy will be used to improve employees and volunteers' skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse.

Performance will be measured against the school's standards of conduct and care to ensure that employees and volunteers meet expected outcomes. These standards will align with those of the code of conduct and child safe policy / statement, so everyone can be aware of the expectations of our school and appropriate behaviour.

Code of conduct and disciplinary procedures

Bridgewood Primary School has a code of conduct and Student Engagement Policy that provide services for children can use which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children.

Disciplinary procedures will occur if an allegation of child abuse is made, or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.

Disciplinary procedures will be accessible and transparent, and clearly demonstrate the consequences of breaches of the code of conduct.

Employees and volunteers should be aware of reporting and disciplinary procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the school.

Members of our school community should also be made aware (via the school fortnightly newsletter) of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions.

Bridgewood Primary School's code of conduct and Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy will be publicly available via our school website. Children and their families will be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported.

Our disciplinary procedures will clearly outline what employees or volunteers should do if they are concerned that their actions or words have been misunderstood, or they believe their concerns are not investigated in a timely manner.

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Standard 5: Child Protection *(this needs to be read in conjunction with Mandatory Reporting Policy)*

At Bridgewood PS we promote diversity and tolerance and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that the safety of particularly young children is considered
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally

At the same time, we are fully aware of the need to be sensitive to the diverse characteristics within our community, particularly when responding to and reporting suspected child abuse. We will take into account the need to be culturally aware and sensitive and where appropriate, enlist the support and involvement of expert personnel who can work with the school in support of the child.

Procedures for responding to allegations or disclosures of child abuse apply to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by a child or in relation to a child, by school staff, visitors or any other person connected to our school environment.

Whether a school staff member, visitor, maintenance person, contract staff member etc., each adult has a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children under their care and/or supervision from harm that is reasonably foreseeable (this applies to ALL persons connected to the school environment).

The question of what constitutes "reasonable steps" will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. In relation to suspected child abuse, reasonable steps may include (but are not necessarily be limited to):

- acting on concerns and suspicions of abuse as soon as practicable
- seeking appropriate advice or consulting with other professionals or agencies when the school staff member is unsure of what steps to take
- reporting the suspected child abuse to appropriate authorities such as the Victoria Police and DHHS Child Protection
- arranging counselling and/or other appropriate welfare support for the child providing on-going support to the child – this may include attending DHHS Child Protection Case Planning meetings
- convening regular Student Support Group meetings
- sharing information with other school based staff who will also be responsible for monitoring and providing on-going support to the child. It is particularly important for visitors and/or others associated with the school such as contractors, maintenance personnel etc. to seek out school personnel who can assist and advise regarding further steps that need to be taken.

NOTE: Duty of care also extends to students who are:

- aged 17 years and over In circumstances where you suspect that a student over the age of 17 is subject to abuse you should still follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse . Although DHHS Child Protection works with children under 17, they can still be contacted with concerns relating to students 17 and over for referral and advice.
- involved in student sexual offending. You have a duty of care towards all students involved in student sexual offending, including the alleged victim, assailant and any other students in the school who may have witnessed and/or been affected by the abusive behaviour.

Different types of abuse and recognising the possible physical and behavioural indicators of:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- grooming
- emotional or physiological harm
- neglect
- family violence.

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

- 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 practicable.

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 (FGM).

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.

Behavioural indicators of physical child abuse:

- 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, suicide or self-harm.

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 (e.g. kissing or fondling a child in a sexual way, masturbation, oral sex or penetration) 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.

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 victim, and are disproportionately abused. 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, a person 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 to be capable of committing an offence. Any suspected sexual behaviours by children under 10 is referred to as problem sexual behaviour.

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, prostitution or attempted suicide
- sudden decline in academic performance, poor memory and concentration
- promiscuity
- wearing layers of clothing to hide injuries and bruises.

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 boyfriend and girlfriend
- 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).

What is grooming?

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for 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.

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.

What is online grooming?

Online grooming is a criminal offence and 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.

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 s/he 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’.

What is emotional abuse?

Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence. 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. Emotional abuse may occur with or without other forms of 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 with other children.

What is neglect?

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.

In some circumstances the neglect of a child:

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

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.

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

What is family violence?

Family violence can include physical violence or threats, verbal abuse, emotional and physical abuse, sexual abuse and financial and social abuse.

A child's exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse. This exposure can be very harmful and may result in long-term physical, psychological and emotional trauma. Action must be taken to protect the child, and to mitigate or limit their trauma.

PHYSICAL indicators of family violence 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)
- internal injuries.

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 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 and/or poor academic outcomes
- parent-child conflict.

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
- experiencing violence in their own dating relationships
- involvement in criminal activity
- alcohol and substance abuse.

Definitions of the different types of abuse – source:

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/progress/health/protect/Pages/schidentify.aspx>

How should an adult respond and what should they do?

If physical and/or behavioural indicators leads to a suspicion that a child has or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, then you must respond as soon as practicable by following the Four Steps (described below).

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse

If you believe that a student is **not** being abused, but you still hold concerns for their safety or wellbeing, refer to advice about Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Child (see below) to determine who to consult with, when to make a report and when to engage other wellbeing professionals. Regardless of the suspected cause, all concerns about the wellbeing of a child should be taken seriously and acted upon. This includes concerns about the wellbeing of a child, which do not appear to be the result of abuse.

You should make a referral to **Child FIRST** 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.

You **must** contact **Victoria Police** if:

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

You should contact **DHHS Child Protection** if:

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

If you are unsure whether to take action, or what action to take you should discuss this with the Principal and/or Child Safe Leader and make contact with authorities for further advice.

The Principal, Assistant Principal and/or Child Safe Leader are responsible for:-

- promptly **managing** the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously.
- Responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse. The support of the child/children affected needs to be ongoing with a follow up support plan put in place.
- **monitoring** overall school compliance with the school's response to incidents procedures.
- managing an alternative procedure for responding to an allegation or disclosure if the person allocated responsibility under **Ministerial Order clause 11 (3)**

(c) (i) i.e. promptly managing the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously; cannot perform his or her role.

Fulfilling these roles and responsibilities contained in the procedure, the Principal, Assistant Principal or Child Safe Leader does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

If physical and/or behavioural indicators lead you to suspect that a child has or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, you must respond as soon as practicable, by following these four key steps:

The response to incidents model is as follows:

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

PROTECT

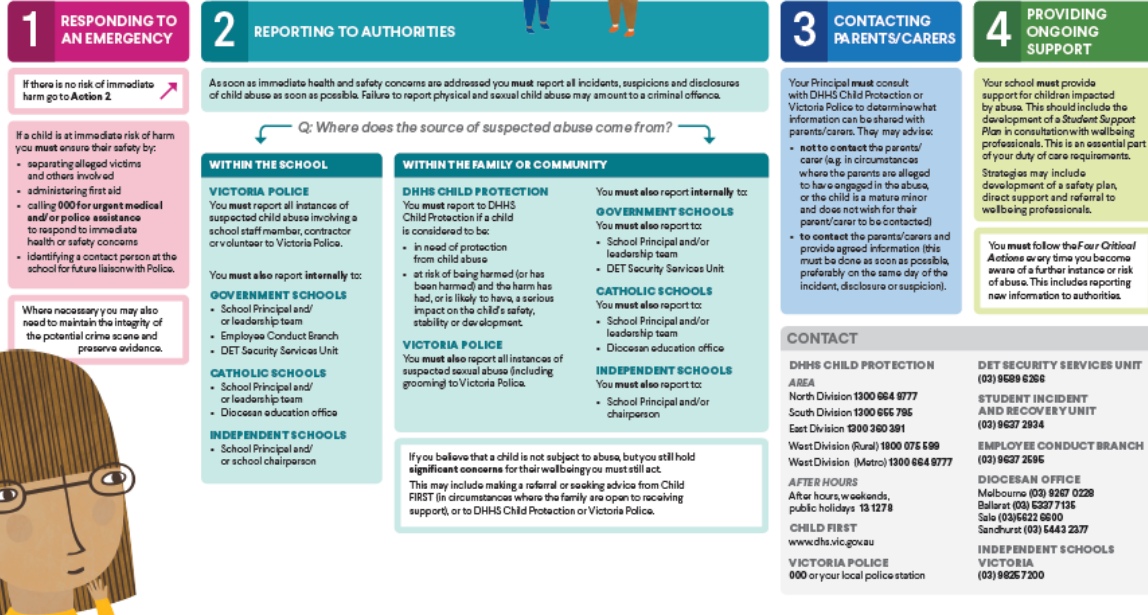


YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

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.



All reporters who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person:

- is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse must report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.
- is displaying sexually abusive behaviours and is in need of therapeutic treatment should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection.

The reporter must:

- Make a report as soon as practicable
- Make a report on each occasion that they form a belief or
- Ensure that a report has been made in instances where another mandated reporter has undertaken to make the report.

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE OFFENCE

Any staff member or person associated with the school (e.g. visitor, contractor, maintenance worker etc.) who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 **must disclose that information to police.**

Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence, unless a reasonable excuse has been formed such as:-

- information has already been reported to DHHS Child Protection.
- Fear for own or others' safety

The offence applies to all adults in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children.

If an adult fails to take reasonable steps to protect a child from harm and/or fails to disclose, this may amount to a criminal offence. Refer to the Dept. of Justice fact sheets on [FAILURE to Protect](#) and [Failure to DISCLOSE](#) for further information.

If you need to report a child in immediate risk or danger of a sexual offence please call Triple Zero (000).

FAILURE TO PROTECT OFFENCE

The new offence provides that a person who:

- a) by reason of the position he or she occupies within a relevant organisation, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a relevant child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by a person of or over the age of 18 years who is associated with the relevant organisation; and
- b) knows that there is a substantial risk that the person will commit a sexual offence against a relevant child –

must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk.

If required, the principal (or deputy) may need to take reasonable steps to reduce or remove a known substantial risk that an adult associated with their organisation will commit a sexual offence against a child.

Examples could include:

- A current employee who is known to pose a risk of sexual abuse to children in the organisation should be immediately removed from contact with children and reported to appropriate authorities and investigated.
- A community member who is known to pose a risk of sexual abuse to children should not be allowed to volunteer in a role that involves direct contact with children at the organisation.
- A parent who is known to pose a risk of sexual abuse to children in a school should not be allowed to attend overnight school camps as a parent helper.
- Removing a suspected adult from child-related work pending investigation.

Action/notification to DHHS Child Protection must occur if a 'reasonable belief' has been formed.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

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

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

- the child is engaging in risk-taking behaviour
- female genital mutilation has occurred, or there is a risk of it occurring
- there is a risk to an unborn child
- a child or young person is exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours
- there are indications that a child is being groomed.

The following table describes the steps in how to make a mandatory report, to report child abuse or child protection concerns.

Step	Description
------	-------------

In case of emergency or if a child is in immediate danger contact Triple Zero (000) or the local police station.

Alternatively, to report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours 7 days, toll free)

1. Keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:
 - information that has led to concerns about the child's safety (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)
 - the source of this information (e.g. observation of behaviour, report from child or another person)
 - the actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with principal, report to DHHS Child Protection etc.).
2. Discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the principal or a member of the school leadership team. The individual staff member should then make their own assessment about whether they should make a report about the child or young person and to whom the report should be made.
3. Gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following information:
 - full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person
 - the details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns
 - the individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person
 - details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person, if known.

4. Make a report to the relevant agency

To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hrs 7 days, toll free)

To report concerns to DHHS Child Protection, contact your local child protection office.

5. Make a written record of the report which includes the following information:
 - the date and time of the report and a summary of what was reported
 - the name and position of the person who made the report and the person who received the report.
6. Notify relevant school staff and/or Department staff of a report to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.
7. For Victorian government schools, the allegations must be reported to the:
 - principal or member of the school leadership team
 - Department's Security Services Unit on (03) 9589 6266
 - relevant Regional Office (where applicable, the Koori support officer is to be notified)
 - Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487.

In the case of international students, the principal must notify the International Education Division on (03) 9637 2990 to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student.

8. This table describes the potential consequences of making a report.

**Potential
consequence**

Description

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or parent of the report.
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed.
- a Court or Tribunal decides that it 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 provide evidence.

Confidentiality

If a report is made in good faith:

- it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter.
- the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.

**Professional
Protection**

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the school without the parent's knowledge or consent.

Interviewing children and young people at school should only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the best interests of the child to proceed in this manner.

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the principal or a member of the leadership team of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.

When officers from DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police come to the school premises, the principal or a member of the leadership team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.

When a child or young person is being interviewed by DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, school staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the child or young person.

Interviews

The roles and responsibilities of staff members in supporting children who are involved with DHHS Child Protection may include the following:

- acting as a support person for the child or young person
- attending DHHS Child Protection case planning meetings
- observing and monitoring the child's behaviour
- liaising with professionals.

**Support for the
child or young
person**

DHHS Child Protection and/or Child FIRST and/or Victoria Police may request information about the child or family for the purpose of investigating a report and assessing the risk to the child or young person.

In certain circumstances, DHHS Child Protection can also direct school staff and Department staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the child. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DHHS Child Protection. for more information see: [Requests for Information About Students](#)

**Requests for
Information**

**Witness
Summons**

If DHHS Child Protection makes a Protection Application in the Children's Court of Victoria, any party to the application may issue a Witness Summons to produce documents and/or to give evidence in the proceedings.

In certain circumstances, the Department offers Counselling Assistance Payments to former students who report having been sexually abused while attending, or in connection with, a Victorian government school.

Schools that receive a report of sexual abuse from a former student should contact the Department's Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637 2934.

Responding to suspected child abuse: for Victorian schools

School staff should use the template below to document any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. This document should be used in conjunction with the following:

4 Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

Whilst you may need to gather the information to make a report, remember it is not the role of school staff to investigate abuse, leave this to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection.

Recording and retaining the record

The Principal, Assistant Principal and/or Child Safe Leader will ensure the **record of the allegation and the school's response to it is made secure and retained**. It is a requirement under *Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools* for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

The aim is to provide as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any reports and may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of Court proceedings. These notes may assist later if required to provide evidence to support any decisions.

Resources

- DET website: Related Legislation –
 - ✓ *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
 - ✓ *Crimes Act 1958*
 - ✓ *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
 - ✓ *Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001*

Bridgewood Primary School



Standard 5: Incident Report

All incident reports must be stored securely.

Incident details

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

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

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No

☐

Yes, Aboriginal

☐

Yes, Torres Strait Islander

☐

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence

Sexual offence

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious neglect

Please describe the incident

When did it take place?	
Who was involved?	
What did you see?	
Other information	

Parent/carer/child use

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

Office use:

Date incident report received:	
Staff member managing incident:	
Follow-up date:	
Incident ref. number:	

Has the incident been reported?

Child protection	
Police	
Another third party (please specify):	

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes ☐ No ☐

Bridgewood Primary School



Standard 5: Procedures when a disclosure is made

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Make a dated file note of the information.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred and document as the information is shared.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or other organisations who have responsibility for keeping students safe.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your manager or your organisation's child safety officer/champion,⁸ police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern

- Explain that we have processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Principal and/or delegate, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on communicating with people with a disability can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-

⁸ A child safety officer/champion is a person in your organisation who has knowledge of child safety issues, and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. You could consider including child safety officer/champion duties in the person's job description.

and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities>.

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

Bridgewood Primary School



Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council.

Standard 6: Risk Management Approach See attached risk assessment table (Landscaped document)

Description

Bridgewood Primary School has adopted a risk management approach which will identify and consider our student's safety risk(s) based on a range of factors including the nature of our activities with children, physical and online environments and the characteristics of children to whom we provide services. This covers both 'business as usual' risks and risks posed by specific activities such as excursions and overnight trips. Where risks are identified, Bridgewood Primary School will employ measures to reduce or remove them.

Rationale

Bridgewood Primary School has an active approach to our duty of care in protecting children and have a risk management approach and a commitment to continuous improvement. Additionally, the implementation of our risk management approach is recognition of Bridgewood Primary School's legal responsibilities to ensure the safety of children.

How will Bridgewood Primary School implement the 'Risk Management' approach-

- School Council will oversee that all staff ensure clear and accessible processes for evaluating risks posed by situations and activities appropriate to the organisation, its size and resources, physical and online environments, and the characteristics of the children to whom it provides services.
- School Council will ensure, as part of the policy review and the annual school review cycle, that Key Improvement Strategies in the School Strategic Plan (Wellbeing) are revised and the processes conducted as expected.
- School Council will ensure annual training of School Council members in: individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing risk of child abuse; child abuse risks in the school environment and school's current child safety standards.
- An annual risk assessment will be completed taking into account all visiting educators, community and facility personnel regarding the safety of students on the school site, including in classrooms, in out of hours care and in the early learning centre
- Develop, record and communicate clear processes for removing risks to children (for example, rules on online communications included in the code of conduct, removing staff or volunteers who may pose a risk).
- Online cyber safety training for students across the school Hector's World, Edmodo and Skooville.
- Provide relevant staff and volunteers with training in identifying child abuse risks, for example blocked-off/out-of-sight spaces (especially rooms with doors that can be locked), overnight stays, and opportunities for physical contact, such as sports coaching and personal care.
- Engage methods for continual improvement in how risks are managed by learning from past lessons, including policy review and staff training.
- Ensure training and supervision requirements for staff and volunteers who work with children.
- Institute processes for periodic review of risk management approaches and/or processes and following any incidents.

- Recognise and adapt to the needs of particular children and communities, including Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with a disability. For example, acknowledgement that greater staff or volunteer to child ratios may be needed for some children with a disability.
- Recognise and address risks to Aboriginal children which might exist because of their experiences, for example if a child does not feel safe identifying as Aboriginal, or if there is an inadequate response to self-identification.
- Recognise and address risks to children with a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, which might exist because of their experiences, for example increased communication with families may be necessary to build trust and understanding of organisational activities.
- Recognise and address risks for children with a disability, for example communication barriers when telling an adult they feel unsafe.
- Have a process for central reporting and advisory contact for staff to raise concerns and get advice about what to do if they need to report suspected abuse, the Principal, Assistant Principal or Welfare Officer.
- Include statements about shared responsibility for management of risks in all position descriptions.
- Have a consistent risk management approach across all areas of the school
- Include discussion about apparent risks or 'near misses' in staff and team meetings and areas for improvement.
- Roster staff with appropriate experience and qualifications to manage high risk environments such as the Welfare Room

Successfully implementing this approach should result in Bridgewood Primary School being a place where:

- situational risks are considered and understood by all staff
 - steps are put in place to reduce risks where possible
- risk management approaches are regularly reflected on and improved
- specific risks to Aboriginal children are identified, assessed and mitigated
 - specific risks to children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background are identified, assessed and mitigated
 - specific risks to children with a disability are identified, assessed and mitigated

Bridgewood Primary School



Note: It is important to note that the 'school' operates on behalf of school council and matters relating to Child Safety Standards are the responsibility of school staff and the school council. School council will monitor and oversee the compliance requirements of this policy for the school.

Standard 7: Promote participation and empowerment of children

Description

Bridgewood Primary School ensures children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. **Bridgewood Primary School** has simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety.

All staff have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child abuse.

How Bridgewood Primary School promotes participation and empowerment of children:

We provide children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to injure them and how they can raise concerns about abuse. Information is included in welcome packs, information sessions and posters as well as on websites and social media. We have 'Life Education' visit the school annually, their programs include safety for students' issues.

- We ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children. For Example: through the school chaplain, principal class, teachers and ES staff. The Welfare Room is accessed regularly by students with issues and where concerns are more serious referrals are made to DHHS or other agencies such as Connections.
- We have access to professionals to translate information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages.
- The school have two visiting psychologists who support students and their families with social/emotional and family concerns through Futures in Mind and Growing Minds psychological services.
- We reference our school's Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy to ensure consistency in the implementation of strategies that promote safe and sensible behaviour, respectfulness towards others and resilience. DET's curriculum advice provides the basis for teaching programs and experiences that build healthy and respectful relationships amongst children.
- We gather feedback from children, for example SATS survey, focus groups, circle time and social media, about whether they would feel safe and taken seriously if they were to raise concerns, and we then implement improvements based on this feedback.
- We enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe policies, reporting and response procedures, and acknowledge and act upon these where possible. For example, views are gathered through suggestion boxes, feedback sessions, emails or online.
- We ensure services are accessible for people with a disability, for example provide appropriate communication aids such as hearing loops, provide access to DET psych / Speech specialists, outsource specific cases to agencies – Futures in Mind, Growing Minds, Family Life, DHHS, etc.

- We ensure Aboriginal children are accepted when identifying as Aboriginal, and that staff and volunteers would understand appropriate responses to children identifying as Aboriginal.
- Encourage participation and empowerment of children in other organisational activities, such as organisational planning and decision making. For example – Student Leadership positions, assembly presentations, Student Leadership Conferences, student forums, SRC and Circle Time
- We raise awareness in the community about children's rights, through staff conversations with families and communications such as websites, newsletters, Information Evenings, Parent Teacher meetings, School Council, etc.

By successfully implementing these strategies Bridgewood Primary School ensures:

- reporting procedures for when a child feels unsafe are accessible for all children
- children understand what child abuse is, and their rights (age appropriate)
- children understand how to report an allegation of abuse or concern for their safety to the organisation, a trusted adult and external bodies (for example, the police)
- children feel safe, empowered and taken seriously if they raise concerns
- children feel empowered to contribute to the organisation's understanding and treatment of child safety
- children's reports of concern are responded to appropriately
- staff understand how to empower children and encourage their participation.