

Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School

Child Protection Reporting Procedure – External

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PURPOSE.

This procedure has been developed in accordance with clause 11(2)(b) of Ministerial Order 870 (*Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools*). It provides a clear procedure for reporting instances of suspected child abuse, and the School’s response to any reports.

AUDIENCE.

Members of the general community.
 Parents / Third Party Contractors / External Education Providers / Public

CHILD SAFE STATEMENT.

Strathcona is a Child Safe School. We have a zero tolerance stance on child abuse and are committed to protecting children from all forms of abuse.

Members of the community who have concerns that a child may be subject to sexual abuse, violence, intimidation or neglect should contact the School and follow the procedure noted below.

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Child abuse is defined in section 3 of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) as including:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or a grooming offence listed in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic);
- the infliction of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- the serious neglect of a child.

A child is defined by the Act as a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Please see the definitions section at the end of this document for more detail on abuse descriptions.

FORMING A REASONABLE BELIEF.

Before you make a report to the School or other authorities, you need to have formed a reasonable belief that a child is at risk or in immediate danger.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

Ask yourself:

- Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm?
- Am I in doubt about the child's safety and the parent's ability to protect the child?

If you answered YES to either question, you should report using the procedure below.

REPORTING PROCEDURE.

1. Check, as far as is possible, that the child is not in immediate danger. If so, call the police on 000 and make a report.
2. If there is no immediate danger to the child:
Report the matter to the School by calling 03 8779 7500 and ask for:
 - i. The Principal or
 - ii. The Deputy Principal or
 - iii. The Business Manager or
 - iv. The Risk and Compliance Manager.
3. The School will:
 - a. Take all reasonable steps to remove the risk of further harm to the child.
 - b. Ensure the matter, including any internal or external investigation, is handled sensitively and in a confidential manner.
 - c. Ensure all mandatory and/or legislative reports required to be submitted by the school are made in a timely manner.
 - d. Ensure accurate records of discussions and submissions are kept.
 - e. Act in a supportive and responsible way toward all parties.
 - f. To the best of our ability within the legal framework, provide you with updated details related to the report.

DEFINITIONS.

1. Sexual offences:

A sexual offence occurs when a person involves a child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to the child's age and development. Children may be bribed or threatened physically or psychologically to make them participate in the activity. Sexual offences are governed by the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).

2. Grooming:

Grooming refers to predatory conduct undertaken by an adult (18 years or over) to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

Grooming behaviour typically involves a graduation from attention giving and non-sexual touching to increasingly more intimate and intrusive behaviour. Grooming can include communicating, and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with a child (under the age of 16) or a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child. Communicating can be by words or conduct and includes electronic communication such as through the internet, social media, phone or text message.

Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity.

3. Physical violence:

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways including beating, shaking, burning or using weapons (such as belts and paddles).

Physical abuse does not mean reasonable discipline, though it may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline.

4. Serious Emotional or Psychological harm.

Serious emotional or psychological abuse may occur when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or the witnessing of family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired.

Serious emotional or psychological harm could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

5. Serious neglect.

Serious neglect is 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.

6. Family violence.

In Victoria "family violence" is a defined term under the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic). It is a criminal offence.

Family violence is behaviour towards a family member that may include:

- physical violence or threats of violence;
- verbal abuse, including threats;
- emotional or psychological abuse;
- sexual abuse; or
- financial and social abuse.

When dealing with children it is important to remember that "family violence" extends to behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or be exposed to the effects of "family violence". A child's exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse.