

## CHILD SAFETY RESPONSE REPORT

Revised April 2021  
Review April 2022

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

# Child Protection Policy & Procedures

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Purpose:	St John's Lutheran Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse.	
Scope:	Students and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements at St John's Lutheran Primary School and covers information about the reporting of harm and abuse	
Status:	Current	Date of Approval: 26 April 2021
Approved by:	School Council Chairperson	Brigita Keiller
References: Legislation  Related School Policies / Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Ministerial Order No.870</u></a></li> <li>• Working with Children Checks Policy</li> <li>• Workplace Health and Safety Policy</li> <li>• Behaviour Management Policy</li> <li>• Child Protection and Safety Policy</li> <li>• Child Safety Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Grievance Policy</li> </ul>	
Review Date:	Annually	Next Review Date: April 2022
Policy Owner:	School Council	

## Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at [www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes)

**Child abuse** includes:

- Any act committed against a child involving –
  - A sexual offence or
  - An offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- The infliction, on a child, of –
  - Physical violence or
  - Serious emotional or psychological harm
- Serious neglect of a child.

**Child-connected work** means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

**Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

**School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside hours including:

- A campus of the school
- Online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- Other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events excursions, competitions and other events.)

**School staff** means:

- In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
  - Employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
  - Employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
  - A volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- In a non-government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
  - Directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
  - A volunteer or contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is intermediary)
  - A minister of religion

- **School governing authority** means:
  - The proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
  - The governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
  - The principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

*Explanatory note: There is a wide variety of school governance arrangements. Depending on the way a school is constituted and operated, the governing body for a school may be the school board, the school council, or some other person or entity. The school governing authorities may share or assign responsibility for discharging the requirements imposed by this Order, in accordance with the school's internal governance arrangements.*

**Minister of religion** has the same meaning as in the Working with Children Act 2005.

## **Health and Safety**

The school has written processes in place about the health and safety of its staff and students in accordance with relevant workplace health and safety legislation.

## **Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse**

Child abuse can take many forms. The abuser may be a parent, carer, staff member, volunteer, another adult or even another child. Unfortunately the nature of child abuse is complex. The abuse may occur over time and potential risk indicators are often difficult to detect. Even our legal obligations for reporting allegations of child abuse can vary depending on the circumstances of the incident.

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. St John's Lutheran Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse. "In the Lutheran school the gospel is to inform all programs, relationships and activities" (LCA and Its School statement). The love of God in Jesus Christ is to govern all that is done, in response to this love; people in the school community are directed to their fellow human beings. Where they love others, they love him. Christ's promise is that whatever is done for others is done for him. Informed and transformed by God's creative, redemptive and sanctifying love, God's people are concerned with the total needs of their fellow human beings (Industrial Relations and the Lutheran school). The Child Protection Program is made up of work systems, practices, policies and procedures designed to maintain a child safe environment and to embed an organisational culture of child safety within the School community. The Program deals specifically with child protection issues and is designed to ensure compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and related child protection laws. Broader child safety issues arising from our common law duty of care are dealt with through our Student Duty of Care Program. The School will take appropriate, prompt action in response to allegations or disclosures of

abuse, neglect, inappropriate behaviour or concerns about child safety by reporting all matters to the Victorian Child Protection Service or the Police, depending on the allegation or disclosure made.

St John's Lutheran Primary School has established simple and accessible procedures for anyone to report a child abuse concern internally to one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

St John's Lutheran Primary School has developed and implemented procedures for Council members, staff and volunteers for responding to allegations and disclosures of child abuse, or suspected child abuse, including procedures for support following a disclosure by a student.

Reporting procedures for third party contractors, external education providers, parents/carers and other community members are also included in our Child Protection and Safety Policy which is available on our public website.

Age appropriate reporting procedures for students are developed through our pastoral care program.

### **Who is Responsible for Child Protection?**

Society as a whole shares responsibility for promoting the safety and protection of children from abuse. In the School context, all members of the School community have their role to play – teachers, staff, administrators, parents/carers, volunteers and students. The school's management team are committed to leading from the front and engaging in a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child protection issues. Students are encouraged to take an active role in developing and maintaining a child safe environment at the School and are provided with opportunities to contribute and give feedback in the development of the School's policies and practices. Students are also made aware of the avenues available to them to report or disclose abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of others.

The School's Child Protection Officers are your first point of contact for reporting child protection issues within the School. They receive special training that allows them to deal with child protection concerns both sensitively and effectively. If you have any concern that a child may be experiencing any form of abuse, whether or not you have formed a belief on reasonable grounds that the abuse has occurred, you should immediately raise your concerns with one of our Child Protection Officers, Principal Mrs Tara Pritchard and staff members Mrs Trish Coverdale and Miss Ebony Stiles. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount. Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

### **Managing Your Initial Response to a Child Protection Incident**

The following sections outline the four ways that you may become aware that a child may be experiencing abuse and strategies for managing each situation, and information on supporting and assisting children involved in the disclosure or report.

**Observation of Risk Indicators** The different types of child abuse and their key risk indicators are set out in detail in the earlier section of this program Child Abuse – Definition and Key Risk Indicators. The process of identifying child abuse purely through observation of risk indicators can be complex and may occur over time. The complexity is magnified by the fact that many of the key risk indicators described may also occur as a result of other factors, not related to child abuse. If you form a concern that a child may be being abused you should make written notes of your observations recording both dates and times. You should also report the matter internally to a Child Protection Officer.

**Private Disclosure by a Child** If a student discloses a situation of abuse or neglect to you privately, you should stay calm and not display expressions of panic or shock. You should reassure and support the child. You can do this by:

- stating clearly that the abuse is not the child’s fault;
- reassuring the child that you believe them; and
- telling the child that disclosing the matter is the right thing to do.

You should be patient, and allow the child to talk at their own pace. When responding you should use the child’s language and vocabulary. Sometimes a student may try to elicit a promise from you that you will not tell anyone about the allegation. You must not make this promise, as you are responsible for reporting the matter. Finally remember that your role is not to investigate the allegation. You should not interrogate the child and pressure them to tell you more than they want to. Once a disclosure is made you must report the matter internally to a School Child Protection Officer. You should also make written notes of the circumstances of the disclosure recording both dates and times and pass this information on following a disclosure of abuse or neglect by a student.

**Third Party Disclosure** A third party such as a friend of the child, a relative or another parent may provide you with information relating to child abuse. In this situation you should:

- listen to the person’s concerns seeking clarification where required;
- thank the person for raising their concern;
- advise the person that we have procedures for dealing with situations like this; and
- advise the person that you will discuss their concerns with the relevant authorities.

As with Private Disclosure you should reassure and support the person providing the information. Sometimes a person may try to elicit a promise from you that you will not tell anyone about the allegation. You must not make this promise, as you are responsible for reporting the matter. Finally remember that your role is not to investigate the allegation. You should not interrogate the third party and pressure them to tell you more than they want to. Once a third party disclosure is made you must report the matter internally as soon as possible. You should also make written notes of the circumstances of the disclosure recording both dates and times.

**Support Following Disclosure** You should take the following steps to support and assist a child after a disclosure of child abuse or neglect is made. The range of measures employed will depend on: the degree of severity of the situation; the risk of harm to the child; and the capability and willingness of the parent to protect the child from harm. After a disclosure is made do not promise the child that you will not tell anyone about the allegation; reassure the child that it was the right thing to do to tell an adult; tell the child what you plan to do next; do not confront the person believed to be the perpetrator; report the matter to one of the School's Child Protection Officers who will be able to assist you in developing additional support strategies; and whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000. Reporting a child abuse concern can be very complex, not only from the perspective of ascertaining whether abuse has occurred but also in understanding what steps to take to protect a child. It is important to remember at all times that the safety and welfare of the child are paramount. Therefore, if you have a concern that a child may be experiencing abuse, whether or not you have formed a belief on reasonable grounds that the abuse has occurred, you should immediately raise your concerns. Please note that reporting the matter internally does not release you from other legal and regulatory reporting obligations you may have, namely: The Obligation to Report a Sexual Offence, The Obligation to Act to Protect; and The Obligation to Make a Mandatory Report.

**Providing ongoing support to students impacted by abuse is crucial. Support can include wellbeing professionals and the development of a Student Support Plan. (See document PROTECT – Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools, 2018, p. 44)**

### **Responding to Reports of Harm**

The incident reporting template (Appendix 1) should be completed and forwarded to the relevant staff member best placed to deal with such reports. If in doubt, the appropriate person to receive the report is the school's Principal. In instances where the Principal is the person alleged to have caused the harm, the report should be forwarded to a member of the school's governing body.

A reporting template which is compliant with the relevant Regulations is attached as Appendix 1.

#### **Important Contact Details**

Victoria Police Service                      000 (in emergency)

Department of Health and Human    [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)  
Services    1300 650 172

The local Portland police station contact details are: 2 Glenelg Street, Portland, Vic, ph. (03) 5522 1500.

**Appendix 1 - Private and Confidential**

# Incident Report

## Child safe standards

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children<sup>1</sup> to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.<sup>2</sup> You can provide this resource to a child or their family if they disclose an allegation of abuse or safety concern in your organisation. Your staff can also use this resource to record disclosures.

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual offence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serious emotional or psychological abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serious neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**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