CSS #3 CHILD ABUSE (INCLUDING GROOMING) – IDENTIFICATION AND RESPONSE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school office.

Background

Kingsley Park Primary School as part of the Victorian Government state school system has a duty of care and is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, including international students, regardless of their age, culture, beliefs, socio-economic circumstances, disability, family living situation, child rearing practices or educational level. There is a culture of 'no tolerance' for child abuse.

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. As members of a community, we all have a moral obligation to protect any child under our care and supervision from foreseeable harm.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- describe how staff at Kingsley Park Primary School identify and respond to child safety concerns and child abuse following the 4 Critical Actions
- ensure our staff and school community raise concerns about child abuse.

Scope

This policy applies to any concern of child abuse or reportable conduct:

- by any adult engaged by the school or school council or any other adult while connected to the school environment (including e.g. staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers and visitors)
- between students
- towards students by members of their family
- towards students by members of the community.

Child abuse and reportable conduct can occur in any physical or online environment and include grooming.

Definitions

There are many types of child abuse. For more information, see Types of child abuse and what to look for and Child Safety Definitions.

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming
- physical violence against a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm against a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. It is also a form of Reportable Conduct. The offence of grooming is when an adult engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person under the age of 16 for future sexual activity. This can be with the groomer or with another adult. Grooming can occur face-to-face, online or a combination of both.

Grooming behaviour can involve the use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques. These can be used to build trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour.

Reportable Conduct includes:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child

by any adult working or volunteering at our school including any employees, volunteers or contractors.

For further information see: Reportable and Notifiable Conduct Policy.

Policy

Everyone at Kingsley Park Primary School has an important role to:

- prevent child abuse (including grooming) in our school or during school activities
- identify and respond to concerns of child abuse using the 4 Critical Actions – based on the source of abuse:
  - by an adult engaged by the school
  - between students
  - in the family
  - in the community.

Kingsley Park Primary School follows the Department of Education policies on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- Child abuse (including grooming) – identification and response
- Student to Student Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Reportable and Notifiable Conduct policy.

Kingsley Park Primary School has other policies that are part of our child safety framework and describe actions we take to ensure students are safe and feel safe to raise a complaint. These include:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy.

These policies are available on our school website at https://www.kingsleypark.vic.edu.au .

Procedure for responding to an incident, disclosure, or allegation of child abuse

All staff at our school must use the 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse. The 4 Critical Actions are:

- Identify child abuse
- Support students in the school
- Refer student to community services
- Report abuse to authorities.

At all times all staff must:

- Respond to an emergency
- Adapt to changing circumstances
- Document their actions.

All staff must follow the 4 Critical Actions - based on the source of abuse:

- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse by an adult engaged by the school
  - Any allegation, complaint, disclosure or concern of abuse (including grooming) by an adult engaged by a school may be reportable conduct under Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme and **must be reported**.
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to student-to-student abuse
  - As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by another student **you must act**.
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse in the family
  - As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by someone in the family **you must act**.
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse in the community.
  - As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by someone in the community **you must act.**

Our school follows detailed guidance on the 4 Critical Actions for each source of abuse on the PROTECT website. This includes guidance on how to respond to a disclosure of child abuse made by a student or young person in a trauma-informed way and provide appropriate support, including suggested language to use.

To ensure the 4 Critical Actions are followed, staff must immediately notify one of our school's relevant child safety nominated contacts on becoming aware that a student is, or may be, experiencing child abuse (including grooming).

Our child safety nominated contacts are listed in the table below. Our school's child safety nominated contacts work with staff and school leadership to provide oversight and ensure:

- child safety concerns are taken seriously
- the school's response is prompt and thorough
- the relevant 4 Critical Actions and PROTECT guidance are followed.

Anyone can contact these staff about a child safety concern. This includes students, parents/carers, volunteers, or anyone else in the school community who has concerns about child abuse including grooming.

Role	Name	Phone
Principal	Gill Gray gill.gray@education.vic.gov.au	9796 0077
Add other child safety contacts as needed **This could include your** ● **Assistant principal or other school leaders** ● **Student Wellbeing lead(s)** ● **MARAM Nominated staff** ● **Reportable conduct nominated staff member** ● **Child Safety Champion**	Matt Brand - Assistant Principal matthew.brand@education.vic.gov.au Sarah Brand Wellbeing and Inclusion Learning Specialist sarah.brand@education.vic.gov.au	9796 0077

Escalating concerns

Following the 4 Critical Actions ensures that our staff take all the necessary steps where there is a concern about abuse, including grooming. If any staff member is concerned that these processes have not been followed they must:

- raise their concerns with the principal and escalate to the regional office via 1800 338 663 or email enquiries@education.vic.gov.au if they remain unsatisfied
- report concerns to the appropriate authorities (e.g. Victoria Police or Child Protection) in line with the 4 Critical Actions.

Reporting concerns about child safety contacts or school leadership

To report any allegations or concerns of abuse including grooming about a listed child safety contact, notify the principal.

To report any allegations or concerns of abuse including grooming by a principal, please contact:

- Department of Education
  - Anyone can contact the Department of Education.
  - Email: enquiries@education.vic.gov.au
  - Phone: 1800 338 663
  - For more information see: Report abuse if you're a current student.
- Department of Education Speak Up service
  - Staff can use the Speak Up service to report improper conduct, fraud or corruption (including to make an anonymous report) or other improper conduct.
  - Website: https://www.pkftalkintegrity.com/?det
  - Email: educationspeakup@pkf.com.au
  - Phone 1800 633 462.

Meeting our legal obligations

Our staff must take reasonable steps to minimise risks of harm to students in their care that is reasonably foreseeable. For further information see: PROTECT child safety frameworks and legal obligations.

Further information on relevant child safety frameworks and legal obligations is in **Appendix 1**.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community. It may be:

- published on our school's website
- included in staff induction processes and annual staff training
- communicated to the school community through school newsletters or our electronic student management system
- included in volunteer induction processes and training for relevant volunteers
- discussed in annual staff briefings or meetings
- included in staff induction
- made available in hard copy available from school administration upon request.

Further information and RESOURCES

The following Department of Education policies and guidance are relevant to this policy:

- PROTECT
- Child Safe Standards
- Reportable and Notifiable Conduct Policy

- Child abuse (including grooming) – identification and response
- Student-to-student abuse and harmful sexual behaviour
- Managing and Reporting School Incidents
- Duty of Care
- Restraint and Seclusion

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	August 2026
Consultation	Staff, Parents and School Council consulted August 2026
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	August 2028 – noting that the mandatory minimum review cycle fo this policy is 2 years or following a relevant child safety incident]

APPENDIX 1: CHILD SAFETY FRAMEWORKS AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

This policy ensures compliance with child safety frameworks and our legal obligations and our school's duty of care obligations. These include:

Child Safe Standards: Victoria's Child Safe Standards help schools create and maintain a child-safe organisation and protect children and young people from harm and abuse. All Victorian schools and school boarding premises must comply with Ministerial Order 1359. Ministerial Order 1359 sets out the actions schools must take to implement the Child Safe Standards.

Reportable Conduct Scheme: The Reportable Conduct Scheme is a child safety mechanism that provides central oversight of how organisations respond to allegations of reportable conduct by a person engaged by the school.

Information sharing: Victorian schools can share confidential information under the Information Sharing Schemes, including the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS). Under CISS, schools can share relevant information about any person to promote the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children. Under FVISS, schools can share relevant information to assess or manage risk of family violence.

Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management for family violence (MARAM): MARAM sets a consistent, shared approach across Victoria's service system to identify and respond to family violence. The FVISS enables schools to meet their obligations under MARAM.

Mandatory reporting: If a mandatory reporter, while doing their job, forms a belief on reasonable grounds that:

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

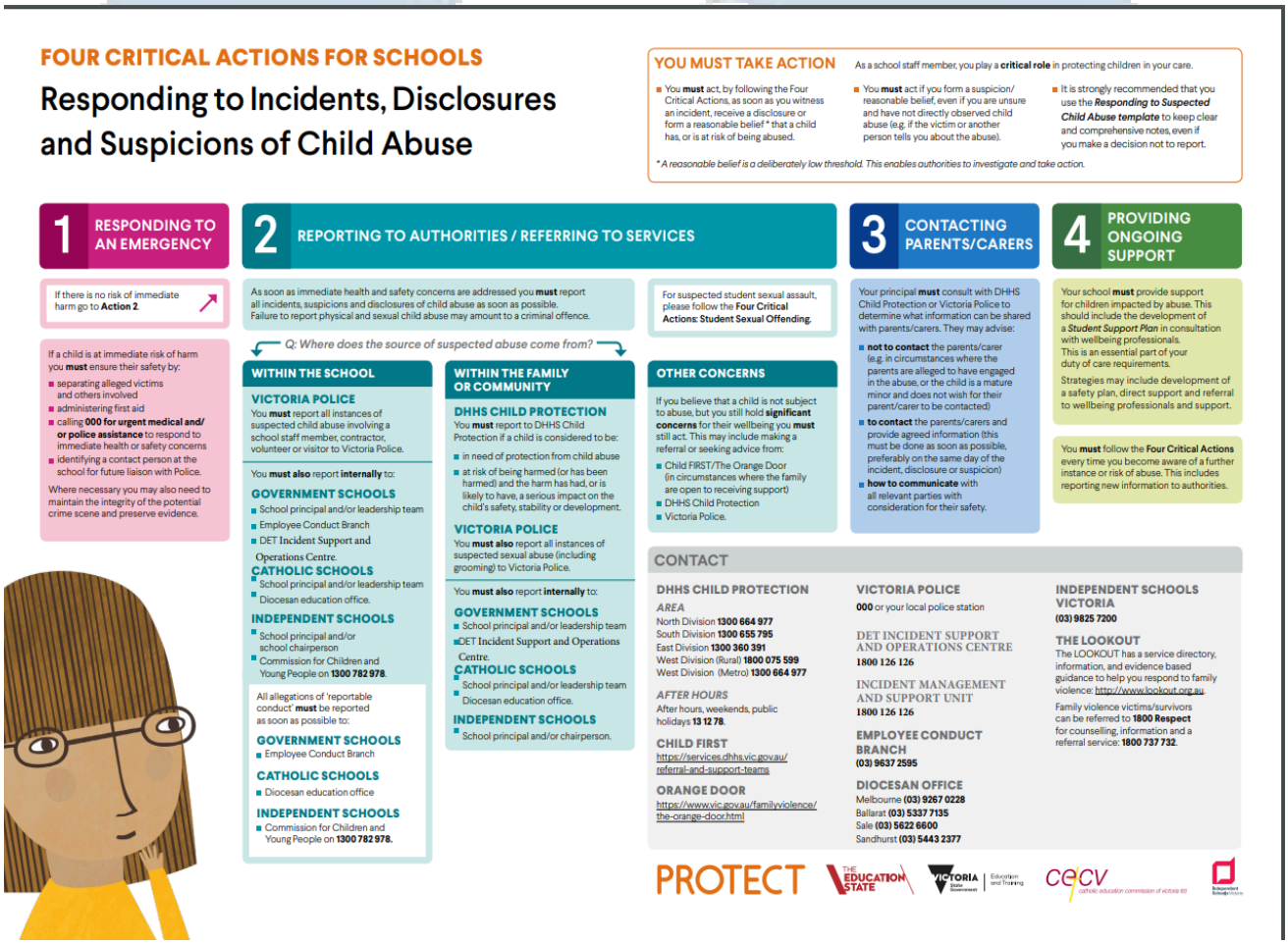
this must be reported to Child Protection as soon as practicable.

Failure to disclose offence: All adults must report to Victoria Police if they have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child in Victoria.

Failure to protect offence: The offence applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Further information about these legal obligations is available from:

- Child Safety Frameworks and Legal Obligations
- Department of Education Policy and Advisory Library:
  - Child abuse (including grooming) – identification and response
  - Reportable and Notifiable Conduct.



FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION — As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief * that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the ***Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template*** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

** A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.*

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:
- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/ or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
- Employee Conduct Branch

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
- Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978.**

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:
- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or chairperson.

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:
- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:
- **not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- **how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a ***Student Support Plan*** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
AREA
North Division **1300 664 977**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 360 391**
West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**
AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**.

CHILD FIRST
https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams

ORANGE DOOR
https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE
1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT
1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT
The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: http://www.lookout.org.au.

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

PROTECT