



**Guildford Grammar School**

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# Child Safe Policy

**School Policy on Child Protection**

**Policy Name:** Child Safe Policy

**Adopted by:** Guildford Grammar School Council on 28 Jul 2015

**Next Review Date:** September 2025

Revised	Details	Endorsed by Council
<b>March 2016</b>	Mandatory Reporters extended to include Boarding Supervisors in line with the revision of the Children and Community Services Act 2004, Part 4 Division 9A, February 2016.	June 2018
<b>October 2019</b>	Headmaster revised to Principal. Provided to Child Wise for review.	
<b>May 2020</b>	Title revised to Child Safe Policy. Policy applied to all Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, visitors, and students. Addition of Child Safe Champions. Inclusion of online environments.	June 2020
<b>July 2021</b>	Document reviewed by Compliance and Risk Manager.	July 2021
<b>February 2022</b>	Document reviewed by Compliance and Risk Manager.	
<b>July 2022</b>	Revised Children and Community Services Act 2004 to Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021.  Updated The National Framework for Protecting Australian Children 2021 to 2031.	July 2022
<b>September 2024</b>	Added reference to Chaplains becoming mandatory reporters from 1 November 2022.  Added reference to School Counsellors and Psychologists becoming Mandatory Reporters from 1 May 2024.  Reviewed and amended position titles within the School.	September 2024
<b>January 2025</b>	Updated Department of Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS) to Department of Communities, Child Protection (DCCP).	

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline to the Guildford Grammar School (the School) community how the School promotes and maintains the safety and welfare of children.

The Child Safe Policy (the Policy) aims to provide policy guidance to assist the School, its students, Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, Volunteers, and other Stakeholders in maintaining best practice in child safety. A key policy outcome is to minimise the risk of harm to children and promote their participation and wellbeing. The Policy also encourages the involvement of everyone in our community to create and maintain a safe, aware, and welcoming physical and online school environment for all.

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the Guildford Grammar School Child Safe Reporting Policy and Procedures, School Code of Conduct and Child Safe Code of Conduct for Staff.

## 2. Policy

### 2.1 Policy scope

The Policy and procedures contained in this document apply to all Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers in the School.

All school Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers must familiarise themselves with this Policy, including the Guidelines section, and respond appropriately and in accordance with the provisions of this Policy to concerns of Child Abuse.

Where a student is over the age of 18 and discloses or is the alleged victim of any type of abuse, as outlined in this Policy, the School will provide support to the student and contact the Police immediately for further investigation.

### 2.2 Policy definitions

**Boarding Supervisors** (includes Housemothers) – A person who holds an office or position in the School boarding facilities, the duties of which include the supervision of children living at the facility.

**Child** – A child is defined in the Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (WA) as a person who is under 18 years of age, and in the absence of positive evidence as to age, means a person who is apparently under 18 years of age. For the purposes of this Policy the words ‘child’ and ‘student’ are used interchangeably.

**Child Abuse** – Is an act or omission which endangers a child’s physical or emotional health or development. Child Abuse can be a single incident, or more than one incident over time.

**Child Related work** – As defined in the WWCC legislation. ‘Work’ is child-related if the usual duties of the work involve or are likely to involve contact with a child. For the purposes of the WWCC legislation Volunteers under 18 years of age are exempt from the legislation.

**Child Safe Committee** – Staff Committee designated to promote child safety and lead training and development in their respective areas across the School.

**Contractors** – People that are engaged by the School to undertake services at the School.

**Disclosure** – A disclosure is when a child tells someone that he or she feels unsafe or has been harmed. A disclosure can also be made by adults including Parents/Caregivers or any person in contact with the child, where that person reveals that they believe a child has been harmed or is likely to be harmed.

**Fellow of Council** – Member of the School Council, the governing body of Guildford Grammar School.

**Intra-familial abuse** – Means Child Abuse that occurs within the family. In this form of abuse, a family member involves a child in (or exposes a child to) abusive behaviours or activities. The ‘family member’ may not be a blood relative but could be someone who is considered ‘part of the family’, such as a godparent or very close friend.

**Mandatory Reporting** – As defined in the Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (WA), the legal obligation of doctors, nurses/midwives, police officers, teachers, chaplains, school counsellors, psychologists and Boarding Supervisors who form a belief based on reasonable grounds of child sexual abuse during the course of their work, either voluntary or paid, are Mandatory Reporters (Mandatory Reporter(s)). If Mandatory Reporters fail to report, they may be fined and/or incarcerated. In Western Australia, the legislation covering Mandatory Reporting of child sexual abuse is the Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (WA). This legislation focuses on child sexual abuse. Other forms of abuse (physical, emotional and neglect) should also be reported, but there is no penalty if a report is not made.

**Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)** – A person who is the mother, father, stepfather, stepmother of the child; or at law has responsibility for the care, welfare and development of the child or is specified as the child's adoptive parent under the Adoption Act 1994.

**Protective Interrupting** – Protective interrupting is a strategy to prevent a child disclosing in front of other students and providing them with the opportunity to disclose in a safe and confidential manner.

**Reasonable Grounds** – A concern or belief about the welfare of a child based on the observation of indicators or information that leads to form a realistic belief that a child has been the subject of abuse or may become subject to abuse.

**School Child Protection Manager** – The Principal, the designated school representative responsible for handling questions, concerns or reports about a child’s safety and/or wellbeing.

**Staff or Staff Member** – Paid school employees including those in leadership, teaching, boarding, administration and support roles.

**Stakeholders** – All parties internal or external in the School community that have a stake in the scope, policy, or effect of this document.

**Volunteers** – Unpaid people assisting with activities undertaken by the School.

### 2.3 Policy statement

The School is committed to the care, safety and protection of all of its students from Early Explorers (3-year-old program) through to Year 12. The responsibility of the School extends beyond academic success to the intellectual, physical, social and emotional development of children and the provision of a caring and supportive learning environment. To this end, it recognises that it is essential that the safety, health, welfare and wellbeing of its students are safeguarded at all times when in the care of the School, its teachers, Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors and Volunteers. This applies to both the School’s physical and online learning environments.

Every person working at or visiting Guildford Grammar School is responsible for the care and protection of its students. The School aims to promote a safe learning environment for students by:

- Taking a zero-tolerance approach to any form of Child Abuse.
- Providing information and direction for teachers, Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, Volunteers and others to recognise Child Abuse.
- Educating students about personal safety and protective behaviours.
- Assisting teachers, Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors and Volunteers to follow appropriate notification procedures when reporting alleged Child Abuse of students.

### **2.3.1 Child abuse prevention**

The School takes a strong policy position on preventing and acting in relation to all types of Child Abuse.

Under no circumstances is any school Staff Member, Fellow of Council, Contractor or Volunteer to engage in any form of Child Abuse or behave in a way that could be construed as abusive behaviour as set out in this Policy. All Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors and Volunteers are subject to the Policy Guidelines set out in Section 2.4 of this document and failure to comply will result in disciplinary action as set out in Section 8 of this Policy.

### **2.3.2 Child abuse reporting**

The School has determined that all suspicions or disclosures of Child Abuse should be reported directly to the Principal (or designate) and/or Department of Communities, Child Protection (DCCP). Reasonable Grounds is all that is required to make a report to the Principal and/or DCCP. Internal reporting requirements must never result in undue delay in making external reports to either the DCCP or Police.

Actual proof of the abuse occurring is not required. Investigations are undertaken by the DCCP and/or the Police and/or an independent investigator.

#### *Mandatory Reporters*

It is mandatory for school doctors, nurses, teachers, chaplains, counsellors, psychologists and Boarding Supervisors to report directly to DCCP a belief formed on Reasonable Grounds that a child is being or has been subjected to sexual abuse. Penalties apply for not reporting. The School adheres to the Mandatory Reporting legislation as set out in the Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (WA). The State legislation focuses on child sexual abuse however other forms of abuse (physical, emotional and neglect) should also be reported, but there is no penalty if a report is not made.

#### *Non-Mandatory Reporters*

The School requires all other concerned persons (which includes Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, Volunteers and Parents) who are not legally required to do so, to report sexual abuse and any other abuse set out in this Policy directly to the Principal immediately.

When hearing and responding to disclosures of Child Abuse it is very important for the adult receiving the disclosure to act appropriately to ensure the child is listened to and protected. Please refer to Guideline 1 of this Policy – Responding to disclosures of Child Abuse.

*Please refer to the Guildford Grammar School Child Safe Reporting Policy and Procedures.*

## 2.4 Policy guidelines

The School has both a moral and legal duty of care to ensure a child safe physical and online environment is maintained at all times. Adherence to the following Policy Guidelines by all school Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers is essential.

- All Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers engaging in Child Related work and activities at the School must have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC). The WWCC must be presented to the School and a copy taken prior to commencement of any work at the School. The School will keep a copy and maintain a register of all WWCC and will check validity of all WWC Cards on an ongoing basis.
- Where a WWCC is not required under law, the School will request a National Police Check or Reference Checks for Volunteers to assess any risks.
- All Staff, Fellow of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers engaging in Child Related work and activities at the School will also complete child safe screening (refer to the Employment Screening Policy).
- Parents Volunteering for overnight activities with their child are required to provide a WWCC to the School. Reference checks may also be requested.
- All Staff employed at the School will undertake a behavioural based interview as part of the recruitment process. This interview will include specific questions about Child Abuse reporting and assess attitudes towards child protection.
- All Staff are required to provide two professional references which will be checked prior to commencement.
- Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, or Volunteers must not be alone with any child or children (excluding one's own children) in an area that they cannot be seen or observed by another Staff Member or adult.
- Physical or sexual contact is prohibited under any circumstance, this includes but is not limited to massaging, pinching, punching, pushing, sitting on laps and any form of assault or any other inappropriate touching, as determined by the child.
- Displaying any attributes of Grooming as defined in section 3 of this document is prohibited under any circumstance.
- Verbally or psychologically abusing or denigrating students publicly or privately or attempts to control or manipulate students through psychological means is prohibited under any circumstance.
- Physical force must never be used other than to safeguard against immediate physical danger (for example, separating students engaged in a physical altercation is acceptable).
- Forbidding a student from sharing conversations or information with Parents/Caregivers or Staff or instructing students to 'keep secrets' from their Parents/Caregivers is prohibited under any circumstance.
- Sexual attention towards others in the form of remarks, jokes, or innuendos, including threats of such behaviour is prohibited under any circumstance.
- Displaying, distributing, or sharing any demeaning, suggestive, objectionable, or pornographic material is prohibited under any circumstance.

- There must be no indirect or explicit invitations to engage in inappropriate, suggestive, or sexual activities which may or may not include a promise to reward for complying, or a threat of reprisal for not complying.
- School teachers, Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers will not be in a room alone with a student for any reason. Doors and windows that permit external viewing of the room should remain unobstructed.
- No member of the School Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, or Volunteers should transport a student or students in their private vehicle.
- School teachers, Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors must not transport an individual student in a vehicle owned by the School. Exceptions include boarding Staff transporting students and cases where prior approval is given by the Principal, Deputy Principals or Director of Boarding.
- School teachers, Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers must not communicate directly with students using any personal mobile device (phone, iPad, laptop etc.) or personal accounts either verbally or by text message, email or through social media.
- School teachers, Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers must not use personal cameras or mobile phones to photograph students. The use of school devices to capture images must be for school education purposes only when appropriate consent is given. School representatives must not keep any images of students on personal devices.

### 3. Definitions of forms of Child Abuse

#### 3.1 Physical abuse

Occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child. The abuse can take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures. This does not include reasonable discipline, although it may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline.

#### 3.2 Psychological/emotional abuse

Occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. The abuse can involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from a Parent or Caregiver to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed, or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired.

#### 3.3 Neglect

Occurs when there is a failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical attention, or care to the extent that the health, safety, or development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at risk.

#### 3.4 Sexual abuse

Occurs when a child is used by an adult, another child or adolescent for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including grooming by perpetrators, inappropriate touching, penetrative abuse, exposure to pornography and accessing child pornography.



### 3.5 Exposure to domestic violence

Occurs when a child witnesses or experiences chronic domination, coercion, intimidation, and victimisation of one person to another by physical, sexual, or emotional means within a domestic relationship or in the home environment.

### 3.6 Grooming

Occurs when communication or conduct is linked to the intention of facilitating the involvement of a child in sexual behaviour with an adult. Indicators include but are not limited to:

- Developing special relationships with, favouring or giving gifts to a child.
- Inappropriate interactions with a child either in person or via forms of media and electronic devices.
- Asking a child to keep a secret of any aspect of their relationship.
- Testing of or ignoring professional boundaries or rules.

Grooming behaviour typically involves a graduation from attention giving and nonsexual touching to increasingly more intimate and intrusive behaviours.

Grooming is not a single act of unprofessional or inappropriate conduct, but rather a pattern of behaviour where the trust of a child is gained, and a 'special relationship' is developed between the adult and the child.

Grooming involves making the child feel important and special, often by giving the child extra attention, privileges, and gifts. In many cases, the child's family is engaged by the adult to gain access to the child outside of school hours and the child is encouraged to see the adult as a friend.

*Please refer to attached Guideline 2 - Indicators of Child Abuse.*

## 4. Relevant legislation and authority

The principal legislation underpinning this Policy and other related legislation includes:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1979).
- The UN Convention is the foundation for child protection across the globe.
- The fundamental principle is the recognition of children's rights as human rights.
- The Convention sets out a framework of minimum standards for the protection and wellbeing of children.
- Article 19 states 'Parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse'.

*Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021 to 2031*

Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031 is Australia's framework to reduce child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts. It builds on the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020, which laid the critical foundation for national collaboration on protecting Australia's children. It will drive change through collective effort across governments and sectors that impact the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

The new national framework is designed to make significant and sustained progress in reducing the rate of child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts. It will do this by driving change through collective effort across governments and sectors that impact the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Safe and Supported will focus on four priority groups:

- Children and families with multiple and complex needs.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people experiencing disadvantage or who are vulnerable.
- Children and young people and/or Parents/Carers with disability experiencing disadvantage or who are vulnerable.
- Children and young people who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, including children in out-of-home care and young people leaving out-of-home care and transitioning to adulthood.

The national framework will be implemented through two, five-year Actions Plans that will include an Indigenous-specific Action Plan. These will focus on four areas for action:

- A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.
- Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.
- Improving information sharing, data development and analysis.
- Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability.

Safe and Supported builds on progress made through the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009 to 2020. This was the first national framework dedicated to reducing Child Abuse and neglect. It was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in 2009, and implemented according to four, three-year action plans.

### *The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*

The National Principles were developed under the guidance of Community Services Ministers across Commonwealth, state, and territory governments under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020. The Principles respond to recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The National Principles reflect 10 child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, with a broader scope that goes beyond sexual abuse to cover other forms of potential harm.

As of February 2019, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations have been endorsed by members of the Council of Australian Governments, including the Prime Minister and state and territory First Ministers. The principles aim to provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing.

The National Principles are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and Volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

#### *Western Australia legislation – Department of Communities, Child Protection*

- Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (WA)
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004

#### *Other applicable legislation*

- School Education Act 1999 (WA)
- Family Court Act 1997 (WA)
- Censorship Act 1996 (WA)
- Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)
- Criminal Code Act 1913 (WA)

This Policy is consistent with the Registration Standards and Requirements as set out by the Department of Education – Non-Government Schools of WA.

## 5. Risk assessment for school excursions, offsite programs and activities

All student activities or events are required to undergo a Child Protection Risk Assessment. This assessment will identify risks and high-risk activities which relate to child protection. The responsible school Staff Member must act to minimise or, where possible, eliminate all child protection risks.

## 6. Education and training

All leaders, Staff, Fellows of Council, and students will be provided with annual training in relation to the matters outlined in this Policy to ensure a child safe environment is sustained.

## 7. Responsibilities

### 7.1 School Staff responsibilities

All school Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers have a responsibility to report incidents or suspected incidents of Child Abuse. To whom they initially report their concerns is dependent on the role they hold within the School.

### 7.1.1 Mandatory Reporters - sexual abuse

All school doctors, nurses, teachers, chaplains, counsellors, psychologists and Boarding Supervisors have a legal responsibility to make a report to DCCP if they believe on Reasonable Grounds that a child has been the subject of sexual abuse or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse (whether during or outside school hours). Actual proof of the abuse occurring is not required. The Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (WA), states that a person who:

- a. is a doctor, nurse, midwife, police officer, teacher, chaplain, school counsellor, psychologist or Boarding Supervisor;
- b. believes on reasonable grounds that a child:
  - i. has been the subject of sexual abuse that occurred on or after commencement day; or
  - ii. is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse; and
- c. forms the belief:
  - i. in the course of the person's work (whether paid or unpaid) as a doctor, nurse, midwife, police officer or teacher; and
  - ii. on or after commencement day,

must report the belief as soon as practicable after forming the belief.

### 7.1.2 Non-Mandatory Reporters - sexual abuse

The School requires all school Staff Members, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers, whether required by the legislation or not, who have formed a belief on Reasonable Grounds of sexual abuse, or who have had a student disclose sexual abuse directly to them or indirectly through a friend, to report to the Principal immediately.

### 7.1.3 All other types of Child Abuse

The School requires all school Staff Members, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers who have formed a belief on Reasonable Grounds of physical abuse, emotional abuse, grooming, neglect, exposure to domestic violence or who have had a student disclose any of these abuse types directly to them or indirectly through a friend, to immediately inform the Principal (or delegate).

*Please refer to the Schools Child Safe Reporting Policy and Procedures.*

### 7.1.4 Receiving disclosures

Staff must be aware of the immediate needs of students making disclosures and will respond accordingly.

*See Guideline 1 - Response to disclosures of Sexual Abuse.*

### 7.1.5 Maintaining confidentiality

In relation to any suspicion or disclosure of Child Abuse the maintenance of confidentiality is paramount in order to preserve the integrity of the process and to allow all Stakeholders to maintain their dignity whilst working through the process. However, the Staff Member, Fellows of Council, Contractor, or Volunteer may wish to discuss the matters confidentially with the School Counsellor, School Chaplain, School Nurse, Deputy Principals, Director of Boarding, Head of Preparatory School or the Principal.

Concerns about Child Abuse must not be the subject of general discussion of any kind. Any inappropriate disclosures of this nature will subject those involved to disciplinary action by the Principal.

#### **7.1.6 Record keeping**

Staff must keep records of all verbal and written communications regarding concerns or disclosures of Child Abuse in a secure place. Such information must be lodged in the Principal's secure file and central database.

Access to this information will be limited to the Principal and where appropriate, Deputy Principals, Director of Boarding or Head of Preparatory School.

An electronic centralised database is maintained to record suspicions and allegations against Staff, Fellows of Council, Contractors, and Volunteers. This is kept separate from employee files and may only be accessed by the Principal and Executive Assistant to the Principal. The person recording the allegation must note the date, name of child, year, class, and class teacher.

If concerns relate to a member of Staff, that Staff Member must be advised that information about him or her has been entered into the database. This advice should include the reasons why this has occurred and what the next steps may be.

#### **7.1.7 Investigations**

The Staff Member, Fellows of Council, Contractor, or Volunteer must not personally or in any way investigate or attempt to determine whether abuse has occurred. Hard evidence is not required to make a report to the Principal or DCCP. Investigations are undertaken by the DCCP and/or the Police and/or an independent investigator.

The Staff Member who is concerned that Child Abuse may be occurring but does not have enough information to have yet formed a reasonable belief must keep brief, written and dated records of their observations and concerns. These should be discussed and provided to the Principal immediately.

#### **7.1.8 Student support**

The School will provide emotional support and actively protect the student who has disclosed, or a student about whom there is a concern.

Following consultation with DCCP the Principal will notify Parents/Caregivers immediately if there is a concern raised about their child. This should occur except where it is possible the abuse is intra-familial abuse, and the Parents/Caregivers are the alleged perpetrators.

The School will actively work with DCCP Staff to design an appropriate School Care Plan for the student.

### **7.2 Responsibilities of the Principal**

The Principal is the School's Child Protection Manager and has ultimate responsibility for both enacting and ensuring that there is strict adherence to this Policy. The only exception is if the allegation of Child Abuse is against the Principal, in which case the Chair of Council is responsible.

Once a Mandatory Reporter has informed the Principal that he or she has made a mandatory report, the Principal will work with DCCP to ensure that the best possible outcome for the student in question is obtained.

Once a Non-Mandatory Reporter has informed the Principal that he or she has formed a belief on Reasonable Grounds of child sexual abuse, the Principal will make a mandatory report and will work with DCCP to ensure that the best possible outcome for the student in question is obtained.

If an allegation is made against a Parent/Caregiver, the advice of DCCP must be sought before the Parent/Caregiver is informed of the allegation. This is to ensure that the subsequent investigations DCCP undertake are not jeopardised, and/or the safety of the student in question is not compromised.

In addition, the Principal must ensure that:

- All school Staff, Fellows of Council, Volunteers, and people working at the School (including Contractors) are thoroughly conversant with the procedures and responsibilities stipulated in this Policy document.
- Staff, Fellows of Council, Volunteers, and people working at the School are aware that they may not accede to a student's requests for confidentiality or requests that Parents/Caregivers, police or other agencies not be informed when sexual abuse has been disclosed.
- Written records of all concerns of all abuse and disclosures that form the basis of a Child Abuse report are securely stored.
- All concerns for the welfare of students believed to have been abused will be discussed with DCCP.
- Victims of any type of Child Abuse are appropriately supported. The School Care Plan may involve consultation with the School Counsellor or Chaplain and, if necessary, DCCP.

### **7.3 Department of Communities, Child Protection (DCCP) powers**

The Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) empowers the DCCP and the Western Australian Police Service to take action to ensure the immediate wellbeing and safety of children and young people suspected to be in need of care and protection.

More specifically, the Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (WA) gives DCCP the authority to:

- a. Interview a child at School before contact is made with the Parent(s)/Caregiver(s).
  - The DCCP will advise the Principal of the intention to interview the child, at which time the Principal will sight the DCCP officer's identification.
  - If such an interview is to take place on school premises without the Parent(s)/Caregiver(s) knowledge, then the Principal will provide the child with the option of having support at the interview from a Staff Member with whom he or she feels comfortable.
  - The Principal will also request an explanation as to why an interview is to be conducted at the School.
- b. Remove a child from the School if the DCCP officer has permission from the Parent(s)/Caregiver(s) or if the officer has apprehended the child.
  - The Principal will satisfy himself/herself that these conditions have been met before allowing the removal of a student from the School.
- c. Have a medical examination conducted so that any bruising, marking and other symptoms can be recorded for future reference.

- d. The DCCP would normally make such a referral to a specialist hospital such as Perth Children's Hospital (PCH) or to Community Child Health Services Centres. If Parent(s)/Caregiver(s) permission has not been obtained for the medical examination, then DCCP may apprehend the student.

## 8. Breaches of the Policy or Code of Conduct

Any breaches of the Child Safe Policy or Child Safe Reporting Policy and Procedures, or the School Child Safe Code of Conduct or other findings of misconduct, will result in action being taken. This may include:

- Meeting to discuss breach
- Written warning
- Further education and training
- Suspension pending investigation outcome
- Termination of employment
- Referral to DCCP and/or the Police

Where an allegation of abuse is made against an employee of the School the 'Allegation of Misconduct Against Employees Policy' applies.

## GUIDELINE 1 - Responding to disclosures of Child Abuse

School Staff, Fellows of Council, Volunteers, and people working at the School need to be aware of the immediate needs of students making disclosures and respond accordingly. The child may not have ever disclosed the abuse and may be highly anxious when doing so.

### *What to do or say*

It is important that the adult:

- lets the student tell the event in his or her own words
- establishes clear limits on confidentiality, e.g. 'What you say to me will not leave this room unless you say something that involves you being hurt or hurting someone else, then I will need to inform the Principal and possibly your Parents/Caregivers'
- listens to the student in a private location within the School
- listens attentively and shows empathy to the student's feelings
- acknowledges that it is difficult to talk about such things and is supportive and understanding
- tries to identify the student's fears, but does not put words in his/her mouth
- accepts what is said and keeps in mind that only the minimum of information is required before reporting potential abuse or neglect
- reassures the student that by telling them they are doing the right thing
- is calm and non-judgemental, conceals any facial expression that may result from what the student is saying
- tells the student that a report will be made to the Principal who will provide protection
- allows the student the option of support during any agency interview
- reassures the student of the availability of continuing support
- documents the disclosure and subsequent discussions and actions
- explains what will happen next and make every effort to stay with the student until necessary steps have been taken to ensure the safety and support of the student
- uses 'Protective Interrupting' if a student begins to disclose in class or in a public area (see below)
- acknowledges that the student has been heard and will stop them from disclosing any further

### *What not to do or say*

It is important that the adult does not:

- blame the student – abuse is never the child's fault
- push the child for details or conduct an investigation, understanding that other agencies have this responsibility
- express judgement of the student, perpetrator, or family
- get angry, upset, or display shock
- put words in the student's mouth or interrogate, understanding that this could jeopardise the interviewing process of the DCCP or the Police
- promise not to tell
- give a lecture about right and wrong
- say 'forget it', 'you'll get over it' or other such minimising statements



- make promises about non-disclosure that can't be kept (i.e. 'Tell me and I will not tell anyone')
- give excessive pity
- engage in general staff room discussion or gossip about the disclosure

#### *Protective interrupting*

If a child discloses in a classroom, group environment or online the adult must take the following steps:

1. Interrupt the child by acknowledging them and preventing further disclosure e.g. 'Thank you, it sounds as though you have something important to talk about, why don't we have a chat at recess?'
2. Be supportive and gently indicate that the child can talk in a more private situation.
3. Quietly arrange to see the child as soon as possible.
4. Listen attentively in a private location within the School and reassure the child that telling was the right thing to do.
5. Follow the Schools Child Protection Reporting Policy and Procedures.

#### *Additional support*

Staff, Fellows of Council, Volunteers, and people working at the School should be aware that a disclosure could elicit strong feelings of shock, anger, and helplessness. As it is important to understand these feelings, the School will provide an opportunity for these to be worked through after the disclosure. Support is available from the School Counsellor or School Chaplain or Principal.

If a disclosure of abuse is received, please speak to the Principal immediately.

## GUIDELINE 2 - Physical and behavioural indicators of Child Abuse

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive but contains those that will be of most use to Staff, Fellows of Council, Volunteers, and people working at the School. Students frequently show indicators from more than one category, and the examples listed are not necessarily exclusive to a single category of Child Abuse.

- Any of these indicators may suggest that a student is being abused, neglected or at risk of harm.
- Indicators should be considered in the context of the student's age, medical history, developmental history, and capabilities.
- Often traumatic responses, mental illness and substance abuse can also be indicators of abuse and neglect.

### *Physical Abuse*

Physical indicators:

- bruises, broken bones
- burns or welts
- hair missing in tufts
- lacerations and abrasions especially to the face, eyes, lips, gums, and mouth
- missing or loosened teeth

Behavioural indicators:

- fear of adults
- frequent absences, with or without explanations from Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)
- guarded or evasive answers to questions about the causes of injuries that are not consistent with student's explanation of them
- disclosure of abuse directly to an adult or indirectly to a friend or other adult
- fear of going home or seeing Parents/Caregivers

### *Psychological/Emotional Abuse*

Physical indicators:

- depression
- eating disorders (anorexia or bulimia)
- lethargy or fatigue
- symptoms of stress
- evidence of drug abuse or dependence
- wetting, soiling, or smearing
- frequent psychosomatic complaints e.g. stomach aches, headaches

Behavioural indicators:

- aggressive or delinquent behaviour
- excessively compliant or passive behaviour
- low self-esteem and/or attempted suicide

- fire setting
- truancy or school avoidance
- deliberately harming animals; and
- poor peer relations

### *Neglect*

#### Physical indicators:

- child is abandoned
- poor hygiene
- lack of adequate or suitable clothing
- inadequate nutrition
- stealing and hoarding of food
- lack of medical or dental care
- constant fatigue
- developmental delays
- untreated sore, boils or lice
- lack of adequate supervision

#### Behavioural indicators:

- falling asleep in school due to lack of sleep
- poor school attendance
- always attends school even when sick
- poor academic performance
- steals or begs for food
- dull, apathetic appearance
- engages in vandalism
- early arrival at school or reluctance to leave

### *Sexual Abuse*

#### Physical indicators:

- bruises or bleeding from external genitalia, vagina, or anal regions
- blood stained underwear
- pregnancy or fear of pregnancy
- signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital area
- urinary tract infections

#### Behavioural indicators:

- demonstrated sexual knowledge that is inconsistent with developmental level or age
- disclosure of involvement in sexual activity made to an adult or indirectly to a friend or other adult
- disclosure through drawn pictures or artwork, visual descriptions or in another disguised way, 'I know a person who...'

- persistent and inappropriate sexual play with peers, toys, animals, or themselves. For example, a child habitually inserting objects in her own vagina or that of a toy or sexually aggressive behaviour with others or a young boy humping toys in sexual positions.
- regression to infantile behaviour, e.g. excessive clinginess in preschool children, the sudden onset of soiling or wetting, thumb sucking or baby talk
- inappropriate expressions of affection
- inappropriate public sexual behaviour such as disrobing or masturbation
- recurrent physical complaints, particularly of the abdominal or genital area
- any type of self-mutilation
- inappropriate interest in sexual themes in artwork, stories, or play
- possession or distribution of pornographic materials
- exposure or sexual behaviour towards others
- reluctance to change clothes in front of others
- fear or state of hypervigilance, e.g. anxiety, depression, obsessively neat, socially withdrawn, or overly compliant behaviour

### *Grooming*

#### Physical indicators:

- unaffordable new things (clothes, mobile phone) or expensive habits (alcohol, smoking and/or drugs)
- going missing or absconding with the purpose to be elsewhere
- child has developed a special relationship with an adult that is secretive
- child is receiving favours or gifts from that adult that is inappropriate or is heard to brag about their special relationship with others
- child and adult are meeting in secluded or secret places outside of normal interactions
- overly defensive of anyone accessing personal forms of media and electronic devices
- an adult or child is manufacturing opportunities to be alone together
- an adult is testing or ignoring professional boundaries or rules with one particular child or group

#### Behavioural indicators:

- disengagement with school, by truancy or exclusion
- unusual association with older men or women
- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual)
- involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- self-harming, suicide attempts, overdosing, eating disorders
- injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault
- adult or child is displaying unwanted physical touch of a tactile or sexual nature, for example, face to face hugging or touching of the body without permission
- engagement in offending, high risk behaviour or criminal activity
- seen at known places of concern
- contact with known perpetrators

### *Domestic violence*

Child Abuse and domestic violence co-exist. Children are in a position of great risk of suffering by being exposed to domestic violence. Domestic violence is an abuse of power by one party against another, either during a relationship or after separation within the confines of a domestic or family situation.

- The abuse of power most commonly manifests as physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse or threats of abuse or damage to property and/or goods.
- Children in households with domestic violence are not just ‘witnessing’ trauma, they are involved in various ways in the violent incident.
- Trauma of a domestic nature creates additional harm because it overwhelms the child’s developing sense of coping mechanisms.
- Children living with violence and abuse have feelings of helplessness, fear of death or abandonment, and live in a state of constant alertness.

### *Effects by age group*

The effect of domestic violence varies according to the age of the child or young person, the frequency of the violence and the level of support provided by external agencies. Continued exposure to domestic violence through the early development years has a significant influence on the child’s emotional and social development and future behaviour.

- 0 – 5 years - Pre-schoolers do not generally have the cognitive ability to process domestic violence and, in general, often believe that they are the cause of the violence.
- 5 – 12 years - Primary school children begin to learn that violence is an acceptable means of conflict resolution.
- 12 – 17 years - Secondary students see the violence as their Parents/Caregivers problem and often regard the victim as responsible.

The effects of witnessing chronic or extreme domestic violence between Parents/Caregivers can be just as debilitating as any other forms of Child Abuse.

### *Physical and/or behavioural indicators*

Below is a list of indicators by age group which describe how a child may react to domestic violence.

#### Preschool children (0 – 5 years)

- blame themselves for the violence
- lose newly acquired developmental skills, e.g. speech, motor and social skills
- have signs of fear/terror, e.g. yelling, irritability, hiding, running away, stuttering, or being jumpy or startled
- often have psychosomatic complaints, e.g. stomach aches, headaches etc.
- experience regressive behaviour, e.g. wetting pants
- show reluctance to separate from parent and go to stranger, e.g. may whine, cry and cling
- experience social isolation
- may show extremes in behaviour, e.g. aggressive versus passive behaviour

Primary school age students (5 – 12 years)

- blame themselves for the violence at home or feel responsible for it
- exhibit poor school performance, e.g. concentration difficulties and memory
- experience fluctuating moods and may be sad and withdrawn, nervous and fearful, or may seem emotionally detached
- experience social isolation
- are secretive about the family, i.e. shame and embarrassment about the family secret
- can be aggressive with peers
- rebel against adults
- experience psychosomatic complaints
- be untrusting, suspicious, or guarded in their relationships with others

Adolescent students (12 – 17 years)

- exhibit acting out behaviour, e.g. school truancy, early sexual activity, or substance use
- experience school performance problems
- exhibit poor interpersonal skills, e.g. lack of respect for others, intolerance of difference and lack of empathy
- respond aggressively or be withdrawn
- be depressed and anxious
- develop psychosomatic/physical symptoms
- exhibit quick temper and explosive behaviour
- be unable to accept responsibility and blame others for their behaviours
- be disconnected from others, be mistrustful, or defensive
- have low self-esteem

Given the strong co-existence between Child Abuse and domestic violence, Staff, Fellows of Council, Volunteers, and people working at the School will act if they have genuine concerns, based on Reasonable Grounds, that abuse, or neglect may be occurring. These actions are described in the Child Safe Reporting Policy and Procedures.