

Policy and Procedure

Child Safety & Wellbeing

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1. Policy Statement

All children have a right to feel safe at school and in the wider community and to be protected from harm. Moerlina School has a special responsibility to protect children when they are on school premises and to intervene when a belief is formed that the welfare of a child is at risk, either within or outside of the school.

Moerlina School is committed to providing a child-safe environment which safeguards all students, and to promoting practices which provide for the safety, wellbeing and welfare of our children. Through clearly articulated policies and practices that meet all legislative requirements, the school will balance a safety focus with positive interactions and environments that contribute to the healthy development of our children.

The Moerlina principal and staff are vigilant in their care of all students. Policies, procedures and organisational structures are thorough and understood by staff through a process of training and ongoing review. These practices reflect the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and are guided by the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines, 2019*.

As a child safe and friendly organisation, Moerlina School will deliberately and systematically:

- *Create an environment where children's safety and wellbeing are at the centre of thoughts, values and actions;*
- *Place emphasis on genuine engagement with, and valuing of children;*
- *Create conditions that reduce likelihood of harm occurring;*
- *Create conditions that increase the likelihood of any harm being discovered; and*
- *Respond appropriately to any disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.*

The school community are kept informed of policies, programs and practices related to child safety and wellbeing, and relevant policies are made available to the wider community on the School's website. The School Code of Conduct is based on common sense and positive practice, and clearly outlines the duty of care students, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors have for all children at Moerlina, and their own rights and responsibilities within our organisation. All adults interacting with students at Moerlina are subject to child safety expectations.

Through an annual, whole of school curriculum plan and shared expectations and practices, Moerlina staff are responsible for assisting children to develop protective behaviours – physical, social emotional, and online, so that they have the knowledge and skills to manage their own safety.

Staff are aware of their responsibility to report suspected incidents of abuse or neglect, or disclosures of abuse or neglect, to the principal or through Mandatory Reporting process. All reports of any form of abuse will be taken seriously. Clear guidelines for the response and management of incidents have been established to ensure staff, students and parents are supported at such a critical time.

Creating and maintaining a safe and friendly organisation is a dynamic and ongoing process of learning, monitoring and reviewing. Regular review processes, including completion of the National Principles Self-Assessment Tool, have been built into school planning at both governance and management levels in recognition of child safety as a priority at Moerlina School.

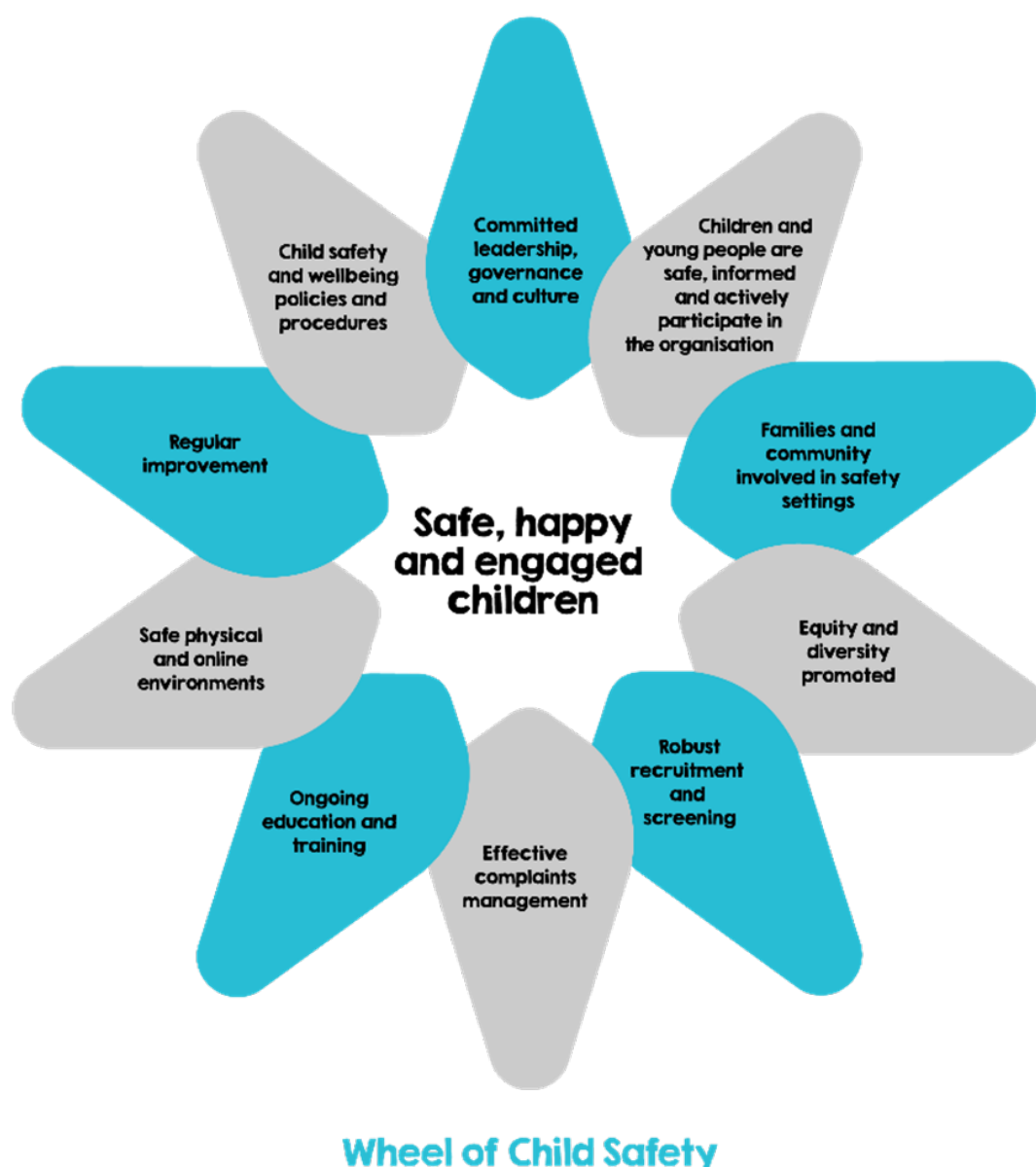
2. A Culture of Safety, Collaboration and Connectedness

Central to the success of a community school are positive relationships between all stakeholders. At the heart of our small community school, where parents enter into a partnership in their children's learning and development in a nurturing, child-focused educational setting, are shared values which give voice to all members of the school community in providing for the welfare and wellbeing of our children.

Moerlina School has a long-established culture of care for children's safety and wellbeing. Through the collaborative approach of our community school, parents are regularly invited to engage in planning,

reflection and review processes with various stakeholder groups – the governing body, the principal, staff and the children. Parents, children and staff were represented in the development of the Rights and Responsibilities that form part of the Code of Conduct. All groups were represented in the development of the School's Strategic Plan. Strong communication channels keep them informed of policies and practices and provide opportunity to raise questions or make suggestions for consideration and response.

The National Principles are considered in addressing the many aspects of the school culture and practices that go to developing a safe, supportive and protective learning community. The diagram below assists in communicating the considered approaches the school undertakes in managing the care of our students to families.



The 10 elements of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations that assist in school planning.

This policy and procedures are implemented in conjunction with associated policies and practices that aim to provide for the safety, wellbeing and engagement of our children, and to support appropriate response to situations if required.

Related documents include, but are not limited to:

- Moerlina Strategic Plan

- Respectful Relationships and Positive Behaviours Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Concerns, Complaints and Disputes Policy
- Codes of Conduct
- Social Media and Privacy Policy
- Protective Behaviours Curriculum

3. Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

The principal, staff and volunteers at Moerlina have clear requirements under Duty of Care legislation (refer to Duty of Care Policy) to supporting the right of children to feel safe at school and in the wider community.

Moerlina School has clear, effective human resource practices in place for the selection of staff and to ensure all new employees, volunteers and contractors are adequately screened and supervised.

Screening requirements for adults working in either a remunerated position or in a voluntary capacity at the School are aligned to State guidelines.

A Working With Children (WWC) card is held on file for all staff, including non-teaching staff, and volunteers.

Teachers are required, through the Teachers Registration Board (TRB), to have a police clearance. The Working with Children legislation requires them to have a WWC check.

Volunteers who are not parents who have contact with children are required to have a WWC check.

Volunteers who are parents are exempt from getting a WWC Check, unless on an overnight camp. Similarly, parent volunteers who undertake a professional role (either paid or unpaid) at the school are also to be in possession of a current WWC card.

Members of the governing body - the School Council, are required to have a Federal Police Clearance.

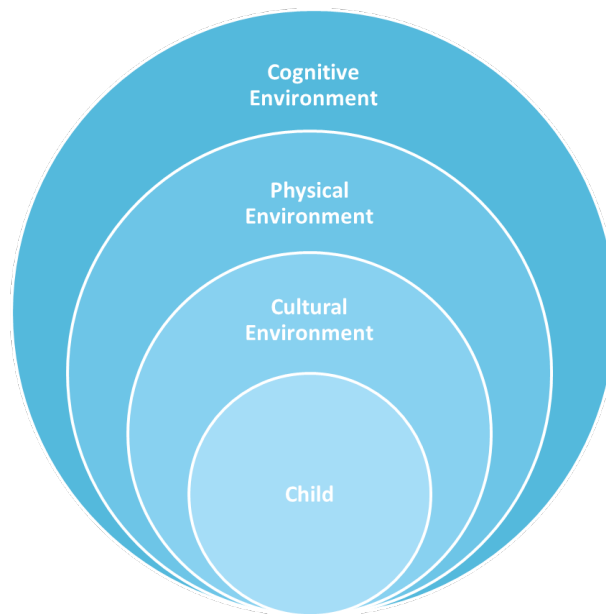
New employees participate in an induction process to familiarise them with relevant policies and procedures, orientation, supervision by a mentor, training and performance management and development.

All staff are required to sign the school's Staff Code of Conduct in acknowledgement of their commitment to adhere to the Code on commencement and then annually.

Clear guidelines are adhered to in the establishment of parameters for volunteers working with children in the school. Volunteers who work with children do so under the direction of a teacher or the principal, and in open, visible spaces within the school.

4. Empowering Children to Participate

In articulating the Moerlina school educational environment in a wholistic context, staff created a model based on the work of Yong Zhao, *World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students* (2012). Zhao states that, 'to meet the needs of educating the whole child, a sound educational environment should have at least 3 interconnected elements: a safe, healthy, aesthetically pleasing and inviting physical environment; an engaging, friendly and supportive social-emotional environment; and a rich, stimulating and diverse cognitive environment'.



The model illustrates the commitment of the school community to putting children at the centre of all decision-making processes.

Further to this, three areas were identified as being key to the difference in approach in the Moerlina School context, compared to more traditional mainstream schools: diversity, structures and organisation, and agency. The school's focus on the rights of the child embodies *practices focused on empowerment and participation of children and organisational structures and systems that provide age-appropriate platforms to seek children's views and encourage participation in meaningful decision making.*

At all levels, staff seek to: share information that impacts children in an age-appropriate manner; provide opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to respond to matters of importance; and provide authentic opportunities to engage them in decision making processes.

5. Child Protection Curriculum

At Moerlina the *Protective Behaviours Curriculum* has been developed to cover a comprehensive, realistic, developmentally and culturally appropriate personal safety component enabling students to recognise and report abuse, understand power in relationships, and develop protective strategies, including seeking help, to avoid abuse. The components of the curriculum and cross-curricular opportunities include understanding of sexual, physical, mental and online safety from programs developed by experts in child abuse prevention

Moerlina staff are responsible for assisting children to develop protective behaviours so that they have the knowledge and skills to build practical self-protective skills and strategies. This is done by:

- establishing a school culture that values the rights of every person to feel safe and secure;
- establishing a school culture that expects every person to be responsible for recognising and respecting the rights of others;
- implementing a whole school approach to the inclusion of social and emotional health practices to provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to care for their own wellbeing;
- implementing a whole school protective behaviours program, Pre-Kindy to Year 6, to teach children the knowledge and skills to care for themselves in both physical and online environments.

The Protective Behaviours programs are delivered to all students, Pre-Kindy to Year 6, across the same term. Parents are provided information about the whole of school program prior to commencement, and have information communicated at a classroom level to support them in continuing a shared dialogue at home.

6. Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to any non-accidental behaviour by adults or children that is outside the norms of expected conduct and entails a substantial risk of harm to a child or young person. It is commonly stated in legislation that the term 'child abuse and neglect' refers to behaviours and treatment that result in the actual and/or likelihood of harm to the child or young person. Furthermore, such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e. neglect) and commission (i.e. abuse) (Bromfield, 2005; Child Family Community Australia [CFA], 2016).

Abuse of children is normally described in four categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators listed in Appendix 1:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional, including psychological
- Neglect

Moerlina School explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment without exception.

All reasonable steps are put into place, through organisational structure, policy and practice to avoid opportunity for child maltreatment on the school premises or during offsite activities. Reflection and review processes following reports of incidents in other settings strengthens the supports that are in place to maintain a safe environment.

All staff are aware of their responsibility to report suspected incidents of abuse or neglect, or disclosures of abuse or neglect, to the principal or through the Mandatory Reporting process. All reports of any form of abuse will be taken seriously. It should be noted that staff cannot agree to a student's requests for confidentiality or requests that parents, police or other agencies not be informed when the welfare or safety of the student or other students may be threatened.

Clear guidelines for the response and management of incidents have been established to ensure staff, students and parents are supported at such a critical time.

7. Reporting of Child Abuse Concerns

There are two types of reporting of child abuse and neglect:

1. Reporting child abuse/concerns (physical and emotional abuse and neglect)
2. Mandatory Reporting for Child Sexual Abuse.

Regardless of the type of abuse or neglect, the school will take action where there is concern for a child. The focus will always be on the safety of the child/ren.

There are a number of appendices that guide the reporting of incidents of child abuse and neglect at Moerlina. These will be applied within the context of any individual situation, and the principal will seek support through AISWA as required to ensure that all legal requirements in caring for the wellbeing of the child are met. An AISWA Reporting Summary Table is at Appendix 2 to support the process.

All strong concerns for the welfare of children believed neglected or abused by parents/caregivers will be discussed with DOC and/or WA Police before advising parents/caregivers, and instructions for response will be followed.

7.1 Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

There are various ways a staff member may form a belief or have a concern for a child's wellbeing:

- They may have observed indicators regarding abuse and neglect. This may include a change in behaviour.
- Observations of the behaviour of an adult interacting with the child
- Disclosure of abuse neglect from the child/ren concerned
- Information from another source such as a family member, sibling, friend etc.

Following a staff member's observations, information obtained or the child's disclosure that leads to a concern the staff member is required to consult with the principal to seek guidance in relation to who needs to be informed, where to file the documentation of the report and next steps to support the child and/or minimise the likelihood of the abuse continuing. The best response can then be decided and documented, and who will be responsible for each area of the response. The reporting process is at Appendix 3. The staff member and/or principal may wish to consult with AISWA regarding these next steps and legal obligations.

The role of reporting the concern usually is the responsibility of the principal. Where the principal is unable to report or it would not be appropriate, this could be reported by a senior staff member.

It is not the role of the teacher to investigate child abuse or neglect matters. They must report concerns to the principal or senior staff member.

It will be made clear to the staff member reporting the concern, where all notes and documentation regarding child protection are to be stored, who has access to them, their confidentiality and security.

Where an incident of child abuse is between children at the school, but is not sexual abuse, Behaviour Management procedures will be followed.

Any reporting of child abuse or neglect that is a breach of the School's Staff Code of Conduct will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate policy procedures.

AISWA will be contacted following other relevant authorities (in the case of sexual abuse), to access support for staff where it is required, and to provide guidance and support for the School Council and the Principal in managing the situation.

7.2 Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse

Procedures for the reporting of child sexual abuse differ from the reporting of other forms of abuse and are a legal requirement of teachers in Western Australia (Appendix 4). In WA, the legislation covering mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse is the Children and Community Services Act 2004.

In WA, the mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse are the following professions in both the government and non-government sectors: doctors, nurses, midwives, **teachers**, school counsellors, psychologists, youth justice workers, ministers of religion, early childhood workers, out-of-home care workers, boarding supervisors, assessors and department officers of the DOC, and police officers.

In the independent school sector, mandatory reporters – most likely teachers at Moerlina, are required to make the report, not the school principal. If the teacher concerned wishes, they may include the principal and other relevant staff in discussions in relation to a specific child prior to the teacher forming a belief based on reasonable grounds. If either of those parties are mandated reporters and then personally form a belief, they are then legally obliged to complete and submit the report to the Mandatory Reporting Service.

Procedural guidelines for reporting of abuse form part of this Policy (Appendix 4).

Annual training of all staff and governing body members in understanding the requirements of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Abuse is undertaken in recognition of our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all children, and in meeting legislative requirements for schools. Online training and certification is through the online [DOC Mandatory Reporter Training](#).

Training is also provided for staff to understand and be alert for grooming behaviours with an expectation to raise concerns around unprofessional behaviour.

Grooming in a child protection context refers to deliberate actions undertaken to engage in sexual activity with a child. It differs from sexual abuse in that it is primarily a preparatory activity occurring before abuse occurs but is continued during and after the abuse to ensure the safety of the groomer. A description of grooming behaviours can be found at Appendix 5.

Strong concerns of grooming behaviours will be reported according to the Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect procedures at Appendix 3.

Within the school context, all staff and community members will be held accountable to the School Codes of Conduct, which clearly articulates the expectations around interactions with students for all adults, and breaches will be responded to according to policy and legal guidelines.

Staff will be made aware of how to appropriately respond to a disclosure of abuse or neglect, and that they cannot agree to a student's demands for confidentiality or requests that parents, police or other agencies not be informed when the welfare or safety of the student or other students may be threatened (Appendix 6).

The identity of the reporter is required to be kept confidential, except in limited and very specific circumstances. A mandated reporter is also protected from liability. If a report is made in good faith, they will not incur any civil or criminal liability by making a report.

All students will be held accountable to the Student Codes of Conduct and the Respectful Relationships and Positive Behaviours Policy, with breaches responded to according to policy and legal guidelines.

8. Online Safety

The internet and social media have many benefits for enabling our connection to the outside world, though in doing so they also enable new opportunities for child sexual exploitation online. Increasingly the internet is becoming more available to primary aged students as a source of communication. Although these communications are most likely to occur outside of Moerlina, it is still a potential issue for the school.

Online grooming is when an older person tricks someone under 18 into thinking they're in a close relationship so they can sexually abuse them, which includes child sexual abuse online. This is illegal and will be reported to the police and the online platform or service where contact was made.

Online child sexual exploitation may include:

- engaging a child in chat about sexual acts

- sending nude or pornographic images or videos to a child or exposing themselves via live stream
- asking a child to perform sexual acts, expose themselves or share sexual images or videos
- producing and sharing indecent images of children online (Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation, n.d.)
- Online grooming, where an adult makes online contact with someone under the age of 16 with the intention of establishing a relationship to enable their sexual abuse.

In addition to the mandatory reporting process as appropriate, concerns regarding online child exploitation will be reported through the [Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation via the Report Abuse tool](#) and the [eSafety Commissioner reporting](#) process.

Computer use is carefully considered and monitored at Moerlina, with clear guidelines and risk reduction practices around student access, e-safety protocols, programs and internet usage and response to inappropriate use or unexpected responses.

The Children's e-safety Commissioner Educate program and resources are used to promote safety awareness in class, and information is made available to support parents in understanding the best ways to prevent online issues from arising at home to ensure their children have positive and safe online experiences. Access to information, external workshops and seminars are offered to parents as they become available through agencies such as the e-Safety Office and AISWA.

Should an online incident occur at the school, or support be sought by families to respond to an incident at home, the [Children's e-safety Commissioner Respond](#) resources will be accessed to effectively assess and respond to the online incident. They offer guidance for understanding reporting requirements, preserving digital evidence, minimising further harm and supporting wellbeing. Further support in responding would be sought from AISWA.

The School Council reassess e-Safety risks to the School annually, including cyber safety, and monitor any concerns through the principal

9. Critical and Emergency Incidents

It is recognised that governing body and school leadership have the responsibility for managing all critical and emergency incidents in the best interests of students. Where any incident meets the requirements of the school's Critical and Emergency Incident Policy, procedures for reporting will be followed.

9.1 Reportable Incidents

The principal will notify the Director General of each reportable incident as soon as practicable and in any event within 48 hours.

While there are six reportable incident categories, two directly relate to child protection/abuse:

- The receipt of a complaint or allegation of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, committed against a student by:
 - (a) a staff member or another student; or
 - (b) another person on the school premises or during a school-related activity;
 whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past.
- Issuing a formal warning, a suspension or ceasing the employment of a staff member for a breach of the school's Code of Conduct involving suspected grooming behaviour.

9.2 Reportable Conduct Scheme

The reportable conduct scheme WA requires that certain matters be reported to the Ombudsman WA, and other authorities, and investigated by the school (Appendix 7). Conduct covered by the scheme includes:

- sexual offences;
- sexual misconduct;
- physical assault;
- significant neglect of a child; and
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

The principal will notify the Ombudsman of allegations of, or convictions for, child abuse by their employees; investigate the allegation; and provide a report to the Ombudsman on the outcome of the investigation.

9.3 Evaluating Policy and Procedures

This Policy, the Protective Behaviours Curriculum, and all other policies and practices relating to the safety and wellbeing of children attending Moerlina School will be reviewed regularly according to the governing body's policy review schedule, and following any incident that has required response, to ensure continual improvement.

10. Storage and Retention of Child Protection Related Documents

It is important that all staff understand where all notes and documentation regarding child protection are to be stored, who has access to them, their confidentiality and security.

Documentation kept will:

- contain as much detail as possible;
- be stored securely; and
- not be destroyed without the approval of the Director General or, where their retention becomes impracticable or unduly onerous, are forwarded to the Director General with her permission for retention in accordance with the State Records Act 2000.

The School will be guided by the current Records Retention and Disposal Schedule for Non-Government Schools for the storage and retention of documentation, which indicates and specifies the details of all records that refer to child protection needing to be permanently retained.

11. Relevant Legislation and Authority

The following Acts can be viewed at www.slp.wa.gov.au:

- [Children and Community Services Act 2004](#) (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children 2008)
- [Criminal Code Act \(1913\)](#)
- [Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment \(Reportable Conduct\) Act 2022](#)
- [Criminal Code Amendment \(Cyber Predators\) Act 2006](#) (changes to s204B of The Criminal Code)
- [School Education Act 1999](#)
- [Teacher Registration Act 2012](#)
- [Working with Children \(Criminal Record Checking\) Act 2004.](#)

The *Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006* is the legislation in Western Australia that protects children under the age of 16, or that the offender believes is under the age of 16, from an adult who uses electronic communications with the intent to procure the child to engage in sexual activity; or to expose the child to any indecent matter.

APPENDIX 1: CHILD MALTREATMENT

Child maltreatment refers to any non-accidental behaviour by adults or children that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of harm to a child or young person. The behaviours may be intentional or unintentional.

It may be the result of action or inaction on the part of a person who has responsibility to care for a child resulting in harm or injury to the child. The harm may include delayed physical and/or intellectual development. The maltreatment experienced is normally described in five categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional including psychological
- Neglect
- Family and domestic violence.

Descriptions of these indicators have been taken from the Department of Communities document ['Recognising Child Abuse'](#).

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when a child is deliberately hurt or is at serious risk of being hurt by someone they know such as a family member, relative, carer, another adult or child. The signs of physical abuse may be subtle and may be easier to spot if a child has no way of concealing the injury.

Examples of physical abuse may include beating, strangling, biting, shaking, throwing, scalding, burning and/or suffocating the child; poisoning, being given or forced to ingest alcohol or drugs; assault using implements; and female genital cutting.

Examples of possible signs or indicators of physical abuse include (but are not limited to):

- broken bones, unexplained bruising and/or burns in different stages of healing
- being unable to explain an injury or giving inconsistent, vague or unlikely explanation for an injury
- unusual or unexplained internal injuries
- a history of family violence
- a delay between the injury and seeking medical assistance
- repeated visits to the doctor with injuries, poisoning or minor complaints
- habitual absences from school and other usual activities
- being unusually frightened of a parent or carer
- wearing inappropriate clothing in warm weather to hide bruises, cuts or marks
- avoiding physical contact.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse covers a wide range of behaviour or activities that expose or subject a child to sexual activity that is exploitative and/or inappropriate to his/her age and developmental level.

Child sexual abuse is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline.

Children who are sexually abused have often been groomed into trusting their abuser and many do not understand they are being abused. Sexual abuse can cause harm to the child including significant emotional trauma, physical injury, infections and impaired emotional and psychological development.

Examples of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- sexual touching of any part of the body whether a child is wearing clothes or not including kissing, holding or touching the child in a sexual way
- forcing or encouraging the child to take part in sexual activity
- making a child take off their clothes or touch someone else's genitals
- exposing genitals to a child
- encouraging or forcing child to watch or hear sexual acts
- not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others.
- encouraging or making a child masturbate while others watch.

Examples of possible signs or indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- knowing more about sexual activities than other children their age
- involving other children in concerning sexual behaviours
- refusing to undress for activities or often wearing layers of clothing
- difficulty walking or sitting
- being afraid of being alone with a particular person
- frequent headaches and stomach pains
- being frequently depressed, feeling suicidal or attempted suicide
- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, threatened or humiliated. Emotional abuse also includes exposure to family and domestic violence, which causes serious emotional, physical and psychological harm to children, as well as placing them an increased likelihood of other kinds of abuse and neglect.

The term emotional abuse also includes psychological abuse which involves behaviours such as isolating, discrediting, and disregarding.

A child can be emotionally abused when they experience hostility, derogatory name -calling and put downs, repeated physical or social isolation, and persistent rejection or coldness from a person over an extended period.

Possible signs of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):

- unexplained mood swings between aggressive and passive behaviour
- significant delays in emotional, mental and physical development, including gross and fine motor skills
- language delay or stuttering
- whole self-image and low self-esteem
- reluctance to go home □ fear of someone they know
- Self-harming, overeating or starving themselves

Neglect

Neglect is when a child does not receive adequate food or shelter, medical treatment, supervision, care, or nurturance, to the extent that their development is harmed, or they are injured. This may include leaving a child alone without appropriate supervision, not giving a child appropriate attention and emotional support, not seeking medical help for the child when required and not ensuring the child attends school or enrolling them in school. Neglect should be considered in the context of physical, emotional or psychological abuse.

Examples of neglect include (but are not limited to):

- showing signs of malnutrition and hunger
- persistent dirtiness and poor personal hygiene such as matted hair, dirty skin, sores, and /or body odour
- often being tired, late for school or non-attendance
- lack of weather appropriate clothing
- being left without appropriate supervision for their age, development and or for the environmental circumstances
- frequently ill, untreated medical problems or lack of routine medical care.

Please keep in mind that students may display indicators from more than one area of abuse and can suffer one or more forms of abuse. Abuse can be hard to discern. Some children show no signs of abuse, while others may show signs of abuse through their behaviour, emotions or physical appearance. Other signs may suggest a child is experiencing trauma or grief. Watch for any changes in the child's general mood. The child may become anxious, irritable, depressed, angry, or shallow combination of emotions. However, don't assume that just because you see these symptoms, the child is being abused. Keep in mind that these symptoms can apply to a child under stress and may not be related to abuse.

Child Protection Reporting Guidelines (AISWA schools)

Situation	MRS (Mandatory Reporting Service)	Police (WAPOL)	Dept of Communities Central Intake Team (Non-MR)	TRBWA Section 42 Teacher Registration Act 2012 ②	Department of Education NGRS (Reportable Incident notification) ③	Reportable Conduct Ombudsman WA	Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA) (the Act) (Notifiable incident obligations) ④
<i>Time to notify requirements</i>	As soon as practicable after forming a belief			7 days	As soon as practical and in any event within 48 hours	7 working days	Immediately after becoming aware
Harmful sexual behaviour (sexual abuse) by a child to another child at school or school related activity	✓ Belief is formed on reasonable grounds in the course of work paid or unpaid	✓ <i>Informed by MRS</i> when a MR is made*	Consider: Notify if a belief has not been formed but there is still a concern or if the person is not a mandatory reporter.	✗	✓	✗	✗
Child on child sexual abuse NOT on school grounds or school related activities	✓ Belief is formed on reasonable grounds in the course of work paid or unpaid	✓ <i>Informed by MRS</i> when a MR is made*	Consider: Notify if a belief has not been formed but there is still a concern or if the person is not a mandatory reporter.	✗	✗	✗	✗
Sexual abuse by someone outside of the school (non-employee etc.), e.g. family member NOT on school grounds or school related activities	✓ Belief is formed on reasonable grounds in the course of work paid or unpaid	✓ <i>Informed by MRS</i> when a MR is made*	Consider: Notify if a belief has not been formed but there is still a concern or if the person is not a mandatory reporter.	✗	✗	✗	✗
Sexual offense by current staff member (including a contractor or volunteer) against, with or in the presence of a child ①	✓ Belief is formed on reasonable grounds in the course of work paid or unpaid	✓ <i>Informed by MRS</i> when a MR is made*	Consider: Notify if a belief has not been formed but there is still a concern or if the person is not a mandatory reporter.	If the offense is by a registered teacher ② ✓	✓	✓	✗
Sexual misconduct by current staff member (including a contractor or volunteer) against, with or in the presence of a child ①	✓ Belief is formed on reasonable grounds in the course of work paid or unpaid	✓ <i>Informed by MRS</i> when a MR is made*	Consider: Notify if a belief has not been formed but there is still a concern or if the person is not a mandatory reporter.	If the misconduct is by a registered teacher ② ✓	✓	✓	✗
Physical assault by a current staff member (including a contractor or volunteer) against, with or in the presence of a child ①	✗	Consider: Depends on the situation	If you are concerned that a child is suffering any form of abuse or neglect you should report your concerns ✓	If the assault is by a registered teacher ② ✓	✓	✓	✗
Significant neglect of a child by a current staff member (including a contractor or volunteer) ①	✗	Consider: Depends on the situation	If you are concerned that a child is suffering any form of abuse or neglect you should report your concerns ✓	If the significant neglect is by a registered teacher ② ✓	✓	✓	✗
Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child by a current staff member (including a contractor or volunteer) ①	Need to consider the situation as to whether a MR is involved e.g. Sexual misconduct	Consider: Depends on the situation	If you are concerned that a child is suffering any form of abuse or neglect you should report your concerns ✓	If the behaviour is by a registered teacher ② ✓	✓	✓	✗
The death of a person; a serious injury or illness of a person; or a dangerous incident ④	✗	Consider: Depends on the situation	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓

Please note these are examples only to assist in understanding reporting procedures and may not cover every situation or scenario.

This is a guide for schools and is not intended to provide an in-depth summary of the school's reporting obligation.

Current at 2025

The information sheet summarises reporting obligations and is provided for general guidance purposes – it is not intended to provide advice on legal obligations to any person or organisation. Employees who are unsure about their reporting obligations should speak with their manager as a priority and also consult their school’s policy and procedure guidelines. The relevant AISWA staff can also be contacted for support on 944 11600 or <https://www.ais.wa.edu.au/services-directory>

* Police may also be notified separately depending on the situation.

Definitions

Child: A person who has not reached the age of 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. ([Children and Community Services Act 2004](#) Section 124A).

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where — (a) the child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; (b) the child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; (c) there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour. (s124A [Children and Community Services Act 2004](#))

① For definitions of *Sexual offense, Sexual misconduct, Physical assault, Significant neglect and Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm*, refer to [Information Sheet 3- Defining Reportable Conduct](#). Notification of reportable conduct is required within 7 working days.

② Section 42 of the [Teacher Registration Act 2012 \(Act\)](#) requires employers of registered teachers to notify the Board, where the employer has reasonable grounds to suspect that a teacher has engaged in serious misconduct or may have taught with serious incompetence, that results in a teacher:

- being dismissed or suspended from teaching at the educational institution; or
- resigning or ceasing to teach at the educational institution

Notifications must be given within 7 days after the day on which the later of the two circumstances occurs. Failure to comply may incur a penalty of \$5000.

③ Non-government schools must notify the Director General of reportable incidents within 48 hours by using the [Reportable incident notification form](#).

④ Section 36 of the Act ([Work Health and Safety Act 2020 WA](#)) defines ‘serious injury or illness’ and section 37 defines ‘dangerous incident’.

Mandatory reporting of Child Sexual Abuse



TRBWA - Section 42



WA Police



NGSR (Non-Government Schools Regulator) –
Reportable Incident Notification



Department of Communities –
reporting of other forms of abuse (non-mandatory report)



[Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) – Ombudsman WA



Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA) (the Act)



Children and Community Services Act 2004



APPENDIX 3: REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Following a staff member's observations, information obtained or the child's disclosure that leads to a concern it is recommended the staff member consult with the principal to seek guidance in relation to who needs to be informed, where to file the documentation of the report and next steps to support the child and/or minimise the likelihood of the abuse continuing.

The best response can then be decided and documented, and who will be responsible for each area of the response. For example, supporting the child, talking to the parent if applicable, seeking support.

The teacher and Principal may wish to consult with the AISWA school psychologist.

The role of reporting the concern is the responsibility of the principal. Where the principal is unable to report or it would not be appropriate, this could be reported by a senior staff member.

It is not the role of the teacher to investigate child abuse or neglect matters. They must report concerns to the principal or senior staff member. The principal will at all times keep the Chair informed of procedures and recommendations for action. It is vital to remember that confidentiality is paramount and that disclosure of this information should only be discussed with those in the school who are required to know.

In these circumstances, it is important that all staff understand where all notes and documentation regarding child protection are to be stored, who has access to them, their confidentiality and security.

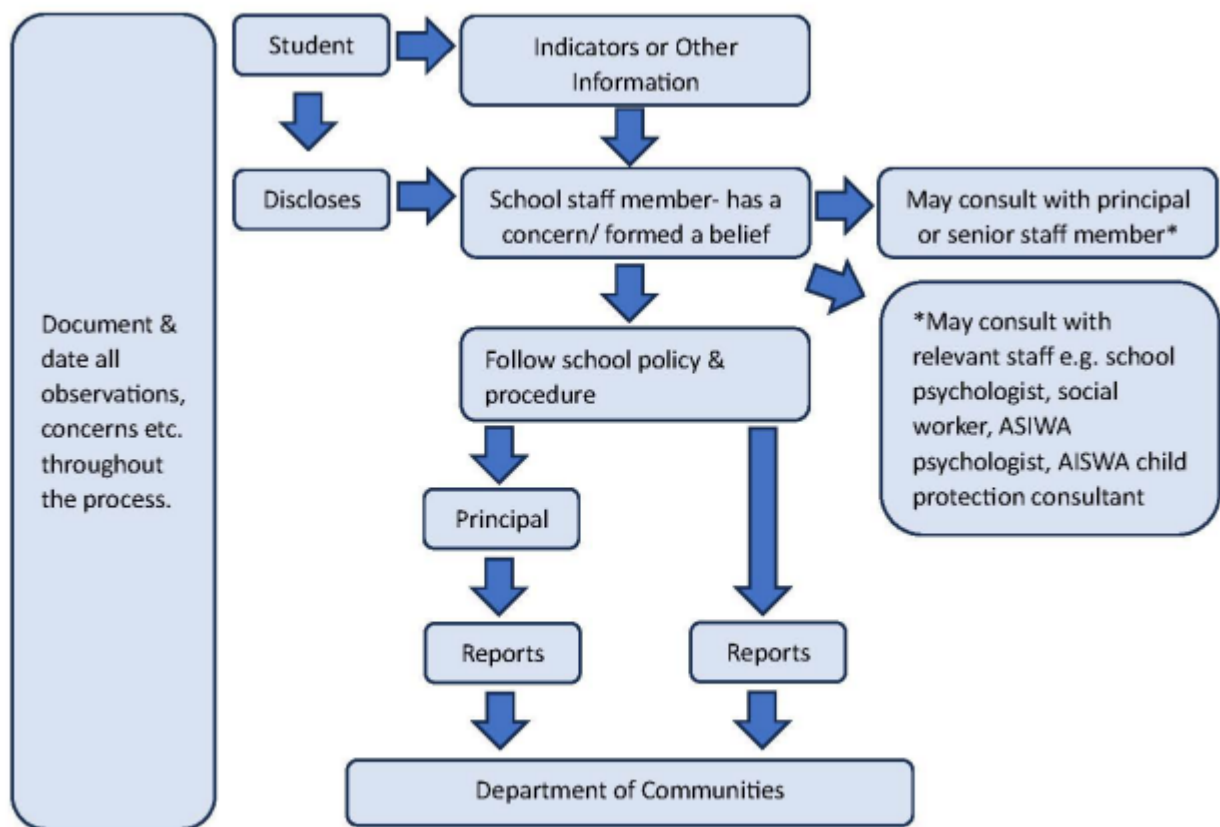
For forms of abuse other than sexual abuse, including grooming of children and online grooming, the Principal will report all disclosures or strong concerns to the Department of Communities (DOC) or the Police Child Abuse Squad and maintain a written record of this communication and subsequent actions. The DOC will then decide how to proceed, including notification to parents/caregivers. The decision to progress the matter further is the responsibility of the DOC.

If, following a report, a family approaches the school to receive support for their child, it is recommended that any interview be conducted with a minimum of 2 school members present (eg. The Principal and one other) to provide support. It is important to remember that the focus of the meeting should be the welfare of the child. The Principal will arrange ongoing support for the teacher, the student and anyone else affected. The need for ongoing support is often necessary as the teacher will continue in their role with the student and the DOC's role may continue for an extended period of time.

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

(next page)

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT



The School will follow Critical and Emergency Incident protocols for reporting, and the AISWA Guidelines at Appendix 2, to ensure all reporting obligations are met under this policy, the reportable incidents requirements, the Reportable Conduct Scheme, TRBWA regulation and other legal requirements.

APPENDIX 4: MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

In cases where a teacher (the mandated reporter) believes on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is the subject of sexual abuse and they form a belief in the course of their work (paid or unpaid on or after their commencement day), they must report the belief as soon as is practicable after forming the belief to Communities through the Mandatory Reporting Service.

It is recommended that staff access the Department of Communities [Mandatory Reporting Guide: Western Australia](#) to access more detailed information regarding mandatory reporting in WA.

If the teacher (mandatory reporter) wishes, they may include the principal and other relevant staff in discussions with them in relation to a specific child/ren prior to forming a belief based on reasonable grounds. If either of those parties then personally form a belief, they are then obliged to make a report to the Mandatory Reporting Service (MRS) unless agreed that they do the report together.

It is the mandatory reporter's responsibility to make the report directly to the MRS when they form a belief on reasonable grounds that sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring. The School requires teachers and other mandatory reporters to inform the governing body chair or principal when they have made a mandatory report and to provide the report number, date and relevant information in confidence to appropriately manage risk at the school. The recipient of that information must not reveal the identity of the mandatory reporter.

Following a disclosure, it is recommended teachers consult with the principal to seek guidance in relation to who needs to be informed, where to file the documentation of the report and next steps to support the child and/or minimise the likelihood of the abuse continuing. The principal and other relevant staff are there to provide support if required.

Decisions will need to be made about communicating with parents. The school will consult with Department of Communities (DOC) and/or WA Police Force prior to making any notifications of concern of abuse or neglect to ensure they are not jeopardising any investigation. It will be clearly communicated to children that their parents will need to be informed; however, the timing of informing parents and the decision of who informs the parents will be made in consultation with Communities and/or WA Police Force.

If, following a report, a family approaches the school to receive support for their child or the school in their duty of care of the child wishes to meet with the parents/carers, or has been recommended to do so by DOC, any meeting will be conducted with a minimum of two school members present (e.g. The principal and one other) to provide support.

The school may consider support from the school psychologist, school counsellor etc or outside agencies such as AISWA psychologist or appropriate services the child may already be utilising. The focus of any meeting in this instance should be the welfare of the child.

The principal will arrange ongoing support for the teacher, the student and anyone else affected.

How to make a report

The legislation requires that the mandatory reporter make the report. The definition of a teacher relating to independent schools under the mandatory reporting legislation is:

'A person who, under the Western Australian College of Teaching Act 2004, is registered, provisionally registered or has a limited authority to teach'.

Once a mandatory reporter forms a belief that child sexual abuse is occurring, they must make a report to the Department of Communities Mandatory Reporting Service on **1800 708 704**, or the Central Intake Team on **1800273889**, lodge a written mandatory report using the [Department's Mandatory Reporting Information System](#).

A verbal report can be made, but this must be followed up by a written report as soon as is practicable, preferably within 24 hours.

The school must not inform parents until they have sought advice from DOC or WA Police, so as not to hinder/impede a possible investigation.

What information do I need to provide?

There are three tiers of information to be provided:

- Information that must be provided under the legislation
- Information that must be provided if known
- The Mandatory Reporting Service officer may ask mandatory reporters further questions about the child and their circumstances.

Tier 1 – Essential information

- Your name and address
- The child's name or, if you cannot determine this after making reasonable enquiries, a description of the child
- Why you believe the child has been, or is the subject of sexual abuse

Tier 2 – Information that must be provided if known

- Child's date of birth
- Where the child lives
- Names of the child's parents or other responsible persons

Tier 3 – Useful information

- Does the child have a disability or a special need?
- Is the child from a culturally or linguistically diverse background?
- Is the child Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
- Information about the child's current whereabouts.

You may not know all of the information you are asked to provide. **IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO INTERVIEW THE CHLD TO OBTAIN INFORMATION.** Just provide the information you have.

What happens once I make a report?

- The Mandatory Reporting Service (MRS) will issue you with an acknowledgement receipt number. You must keep this; it is your proof that you made a report.
- The MRS must provide the Police with a copy of every written report.
- The MRS will make enquiries and an assessment, then take the necessary action.
- The Police may undertake a separate investigation.
- The MRS will issue a feedback letter which will indicate to the reporter:
 - That a copy of the report has been forwarded to the Child Protection Squad; and

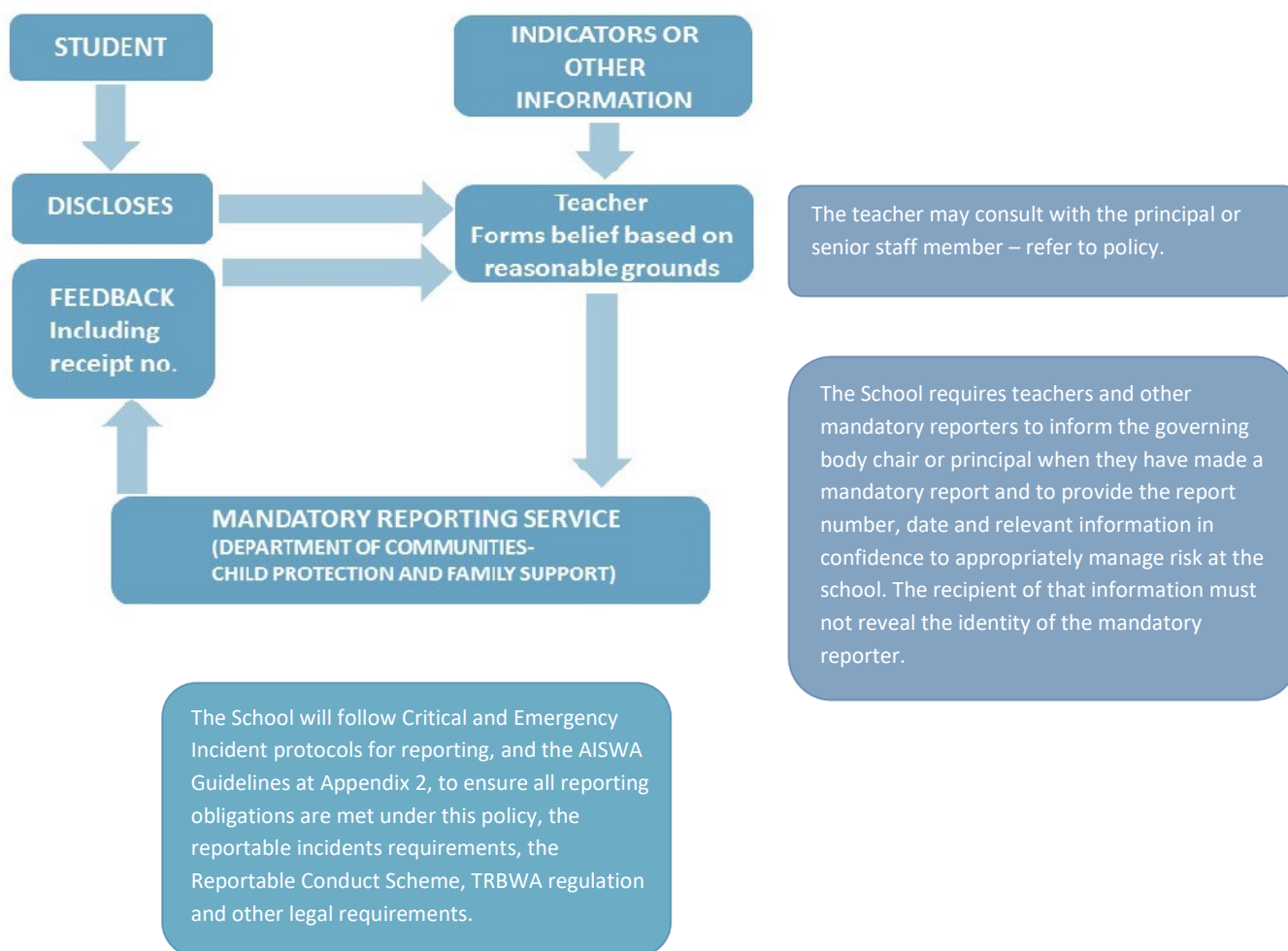
- Which DOC District Office the report has been referred to; or
- Whether no further action was recommended by the Mandatory Reporting Service.

If, following a report, a family approaches the school to receive support for their child, it is recommended that any interview be conducted with a minimum of 2 school members present (e.g. The Principal and one other) to provide support. It is important to remember that the focus of the meeting should be the welfare of the child.

In cases of child sexual abuse, the legislation provides protection for the person reporting. Disclosure of the reporter's identity or identifying information to parents or any other party can incur a fine of \$24,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The Principal will arrange ongoing support for the teacher, the student and anyone else affected.

MANDATORY REPORTING PROCEDURE



APPENDIX 5: GROOMING BEHAVIOURS

Grooming refers to 'actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child' (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, p. 9).

Gifts such as treats, online game credits, drugs and alcohol or money may be used as a means to befriend a child or adults around the child in order to gain access to the child. The behaviour remains grooming as the intention is to gain access, lower inhibition and secure secrecy for the abuse rather than an exchange of sexual favour.

Grooming often includes:

- giving gifts or special attention to the child (and/or their caregiver) to make them feel special and indebted to the person causing the abuse
- normalising close physical contact, such as tickling and wrestling
- gradually exposing the child to sexual material and/or sexual acts
- trying to control the child through making them feel guilty or ashamed (to believe it is 'their fault') as well as outright threatening them
- singling one child out and treating them as 'special'
- arranging special activities or spending extra time with them
- isolating a child from other adults or children
- encouraging a child to use alcohol and drugs
- being exceptionally helpful in supporting a family either financially, emotionally or practically.

These tactics are used to reduce the chance the child will stop engaging in sexual activity with them and minimise the risk of the child disclosing to other adults that the abuse has occurred. Grooming also often involves trusted family members of the child, to gain alone time with the child and minimise barriers from anyone who may be protective of the child.

In addition to grooming the child, the groomer will use deflection strategies to remain unchallenged. Some of these strategies may include where the perpetrator:

- promotes self and creates a reputation as caring, child-loving, competent, available, trustworthy, truthful;
- raises doubts about the motives, mental health, reliability of the child or anyone else who might approach support services with allegations;
- fosters dependency as someone the family can rely on; and
- positively represents child to others so as to be perceived as someone who would never harm the child.

Preventing or interrupting the Grooming process

Organisations unfortunately provide a vast array of opportunities for groomers to enact the grooming process. Some abusers have a particular preference for children within particular age bands and some studies have shown that groomers will take child focussed employment primarily to get access to a particular cohort of children.

Within an organisational context, holding all staff members accountable to the school code of conduct and challenging boundary crossings and violations is one of the most accessible strategies to combat grooming behaviour.

Employees, other professionals and volunteers, and others, must have very clear understandings of the expectations around interactions with students and processes for reporting concerning behaviours. Where an employee is investigated for behaviours considered to be grooming, school authorities are obligated to report this to both the Direct General of the DoE WA and the TRBWA.

APPENDIX 6: RESPONSE TO DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

If a student makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect, staff should be aware of the immediate needs of the student and know what to do in these circumstances. Children will rarely use adult language or specific terms when disclosing abuse, the language used will be at the developmental level of the child, so staff may not initially pick up the nuances of the disclosure.

Most disclosures are accidental, that is the child did not intend to disclose, and it is likely that the disclosure will only be partial. Staff should not attempt to elicit a full disclosure or ask direct questions. The child should be encouraged to speak freely (ie a free narrative), but staff should not try to direct the child down a particular path of thought.

The following are suggested elements that form part of the school policy and are discussed at staff training:

- Use 'protective interrupting' if students begin to disclose in class or in a public area to protect them from sharing the information with too many other people
- Acknowledge that you have heard them and stop them from disclosing any further
- Be supportive and gently indicate that they might tell you about it in a more private situation
- Quietly arrange to see them as soon as possible, in a situation away from other students
- Establish clear limits on confidentiality by telling the child that a report will be made to a person who will be able to provide help and protection and that you will help them throughout the process
- Put your own feelings aside and listen as if the information is not sensational
- Provide reassurance that the student is believed that they were right to tell and it was not their fault
- remain as objective as possible as a staff member and do not make judgements about what has happened
- Listen to students in an appropriate private location within the school, that is a place where the interactions can be observed but not heard by others
- Be supportive and understanding
- Be empathetic to student feelings; the student may be confused because of the relationship with the abuser; eg: loving parents shouldn't do abusive things
- Acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such things
- Try to identify students' immediate fears
- Let students tell the event in their own words; when reporting, do not paraphrase but try to be as accurate as possible
- If you are unable to answer all the questions of the child, it is OK to let them know
- Once you have established that they have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed, do not pursue the conversation any further. This is important to ensure that questions cannot be raised later about possible manipulation of the disclosure
- Allow students the option of support during any agency interview and reassure them of the availability of continuing support
- Document the conversation that you have had remembering as accurately as you can, the words and phrases used by the child to describe what has happened to them
- Document the disclosure and subsequent discussion and actions
- Explain what will happen next
- Try and stay with the student after the disclosure to provide a sense of security until necessary steps have been taken to ensure the safety and support.

Staff must be careful that they:

- don't push for details or conduct an investigation. Other agencies have this responsibility;
- don't express judgement of the student, perpetrator or family;
- don't get angry, upset or show shock;
- don't ask questions that may make the child feel guilty or inadequate;
- don't ask leading questions, for instance 'Did Daddy hit you?';
- don't put words in students' mouths or interrogate as this could jeopardise the interviewing process of CPFS and Police;
- don't promise not to tell when there are clear limits on confidentiality;
- never make false promises;
- don't give a lecture about right and wrong;
- don't say 'forget it', 'you'll get over it' or other such minimising statements;
- don't give excessive pity;
- respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and do not share the information with anyone other than the Principal and either the Department for Child Protection or the Police. This includes not engaging in general staffroom discussion about the disclosure.

Staff must be aware that a disclosure can arouse within themselves strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness. It is important to try and control these feelings and work through them after the disclosure. Even a hint of disbelief could cause a child to stop disclosing.

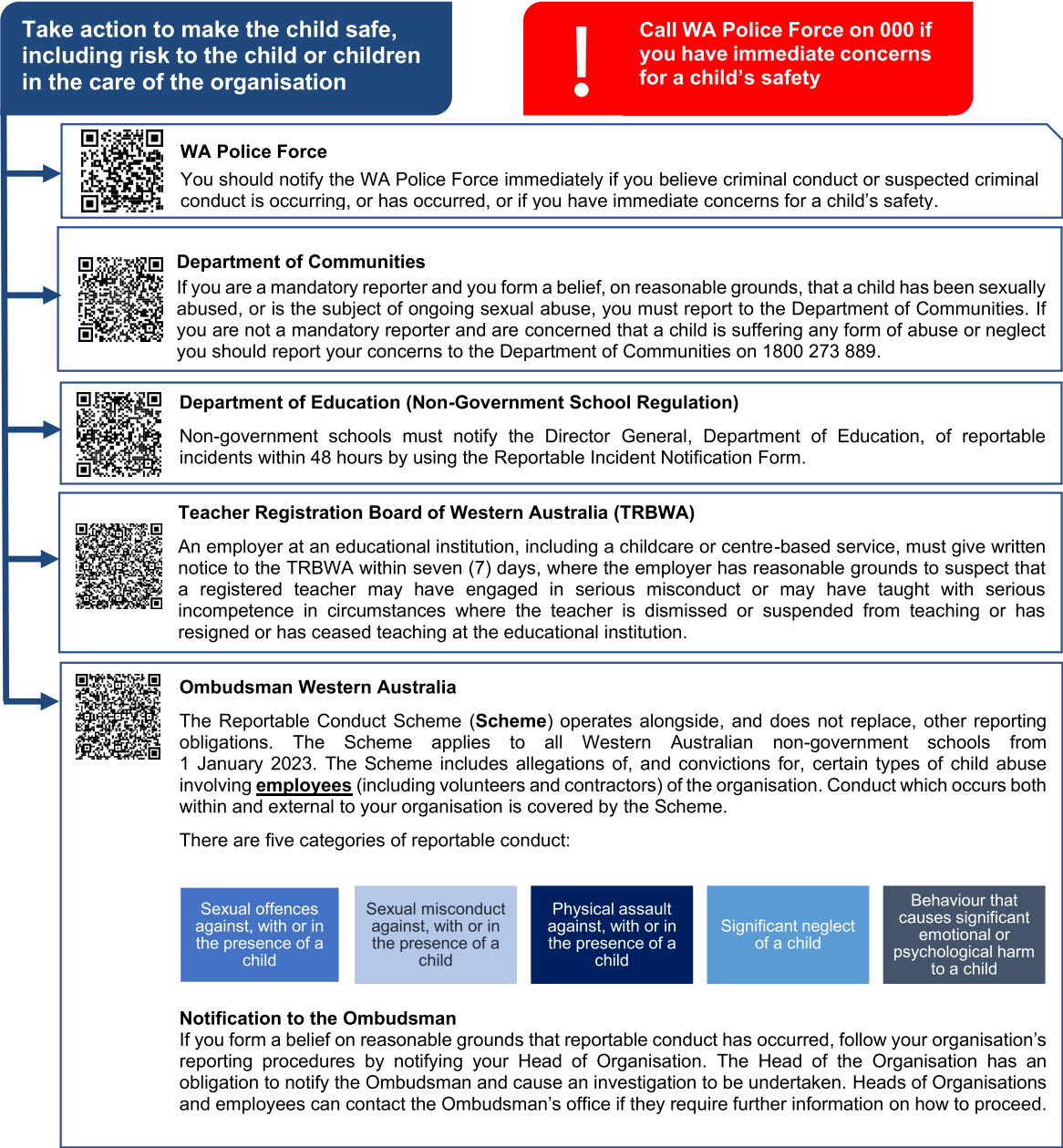
Reportable Conduct Scheme

Non-Government School Sector Reporting Obligations

Published: December 2023

Staff and volunteers who work in the non-government school sector have reporting obligations to protect children from abuse or other harm that may occur while they are in the care of the organisation or elsewhere. Reports may need to be made to more than one agency, as summarised in the chart below.

I am concerned about a child's safety. What should I do?



	Date	Changes	By Whom	Reviewed by Council
Published	February 2021	Aligned to current Standards for Non-government Schools	Perette Minciullo	March 2021
Reviewed	January 2023	Change of language from Child Maltreatment to Child abuse, in line with Standards	Perette Minciullo	
Reviewed	January 2025	Updated online grooming, reportable conduct scheme, reportable incidents, additional requirements for complaints register	Perette Minciullo Staff	
Reviewed	May 2026	Updated mandatory reporter categories, critical incidents alignment, AISWA guidelines alignment	Perette Minciullo	