



Sacré Cœur

PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting Obligations Procedure

Introduction

It is the policy of Sacré Cœur to live out the values that reflect its Sacred Heart tradition. These values are embodied in the Five Goals of Sacred Heart education, which are:

1. A personal and active faith in God
2. A deep respect for intellectual values
3. The building of community as a Christian value
4. A social awareness that impels to action
5. Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom

1. PROTECT

PROTECT is the Victorian Government's framework that guides schools in identifying, responding to, and reporting child abuse, and supporting children, young people, and their families to access appropriate services.

This procedure outlines how Sacré Cœur will respond to complaints, disclosures, allegations, suspicions, and incidents relating to child abuse and ensures that all staff understand and comply with their legal and professional obligations.

PROTECT provides guidance on responding to child abuse arising from the following sources:

1. Child abuse by an adult engaged by a school, including grooming and reportable conduct
2. Student-to-student abuse, including harmful sexual behaviours and student sexual offending
3. Child abuse occurring within the family, including circumstances requiring mandatory reporting
4. Child abuse occurring within the broader community

The **PROTECT** framework supports schools to identify concerns, provide appropriate support, make referrals to specialist services, and report concerns to relevant authorities. It assists schools to connect children, young people, and their families with the right support at the right time.

The framework is based on four critical actions:

1. Identify
2. Support
3. Refer
4. Report

The order and application of these actions may vary depending on the source and nature of the abuse. At all times, Sacré Cœur staff must:

- Respond to any immediate risk to a child's safety and wellbeing
- Adapt actions as circumstances change or new information becomes available
- Accurately document concerns, decisions, actions taken, and reports made

PROTECT also provides guidance regarding:

- Contacting parents and caregivers
- Information sharing under relevant legislation
- Referrals to support services, including The Orange Door, sexual assault services, harmful sexual behaviour services, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

- Reporting concerns to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection and Victoria Police where required.

The **PROTECT** framework aligns with Sacré Cœur's existing child safety obligations and programs, including:

- The Child Safe Standards
- The Reportable Conduct Scheme
- The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)
- Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes
- Relevant Catholic education child safety requirements and School policies

Staff reporting obligations, including mandatory reporting and reportable conduct obligations, remain unchanged and must be fulfilled in accordance with applicable legislation and School procedures.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- Outline how Sacré Cœur responds to complaints, disclosures, allegations, suspicions, and incidents relating to child abuse
- Ensure the safety, wellbeing, and best interests of children and young people are prioritised in all responses
- Support compliance with legislative, regulatory, and child safety obligations
- Ensure staff, volunteers, contractors, Board Members, and other members of the School community understand their responsibilities for identifying, responding to, referring and reporting child abuse concerns

3. Scope

This procedure applies to all staff members, volunteers, contractors, consultants, Board Members, service providers, visitors, and any other person engaged by or connected to the School. This procedure applies to complaints, concerns, disclosures, allegations, suspicions, and incidents relating to child abuse involving a child or young person that arise:

- On School premises
- During School activities, excursions, camps, sporting events, and other School-related programs
- In online or digital environments connected to the School
- In circumstances where the conduct, relationship, or concern has a connection to the School community

4. Definitions

Child abuse:

- Physical violence inflicted on a child
- Sexual offences committed against a child
- Grooming of a child by an adult
- Family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- Serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- Serious neglect of a child

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include student-to-student incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating

(including electronic communications and communicating by conduct) and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/caregiver.

Staff member

For the purpose of this procedure, a staff member includes any person engaged by the School in a paid or voluntary capacity who performs work, duties, or activities on behalf of the School.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Teaching and non-teaching employees
- School leaders and members of the executive team.
- Casual, temporary, fixed-term, and permanent employees.
- Contractors, consultants, and agency personnel engaged by the School.
- Volunteers, including parent volunteers and community members undertaking child-related work.
- Pre-service teachers, student placements, trainees, and apprentices.
- Board Members and Committee Members performing child-related work or exercising governance responsibilities.
- Any other person authorised by the School to provide services, activities, programs, or support to students.

All staff members are required to comply with the School's Child Safety Program, policies, procedures, Code of Conduct, and reporting obligations, regardless of their employment or engagement status.

5. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

At Sacré Cœur, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our School. All students enrolled at Sacré Cœur have the right to feel safe and to be safe. The safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our care will always be our first priority and **we do not** and **will not tolerate** child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children and young people are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children. Please refer to the School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Program which is detailed in the below policies and procedures as to how the School demonstrates and implements the Child Safety and Wellbeing Program at the School.

6. Identifying Child Abuse

To ensure Sacré Cœur can respond appropriately and in the best interests of children and young people when concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of child abuse arise, all staff members and relevant volunteers must:

- Understand the indicators of child abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, neglect, family violence, grooming behaviours, and harmful sexual behaviours. Staff should be familiar with both the signs of abuse in children and young people and the behavioural indicators commonly exhibited by perpetrators. For detailed information, refer to the School's Child Safety Program, policies and procedures on identifying child abuse.
- Understand their legal, professional, and ethical responsibilities in relation to child safety, including mandatory reporting obligations, failure to disclose obligations, information sharing requirements, and reporting concerns to relevant authorities. Staff should be aware that a concern does not need to be proven before action is taken.
- Respond promptly to any concern, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion of child abuse in accordance with this procedure and other relevant School policies and procedures.
- Maintain accurate, objective, and timely records of any child safety concerns, disclosures, observations, actions taken, and reports made.
- Seek guidance from the Principal, Child Safety Officer, or the Leadership Team, where appropriate, while ensuring that concerns are escalated without delay.

- Prioritise the safety, wellbeing, and best interests of the child or young person in all decision-making and actions.

At Sacré Cœur, we recognise and respect the diversity of our students, families, and community. When identifying and responding to child safety concerns, we consider each child's individual circumstances, needs, identity, culture, language, disability, developmental stage, family context, and lived experiences. We are committed to providing culturally safe, inclusive, and child-centred responses that support the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disability, children who are unable to live at home, and children who identify as LGBTQIA+.

7. Procedure for Responding to an Incident, Disclosure, Allegation or Suspicion of Child Abuse

Sacré Cœur is committed to responding promptly, appropriately, and in the best interests of children and young people when concerns relating to child abuse arise. All staff members, volunteers, contractors, and Board Members must act immediately if they witness, receive, suspect, or become aware of an incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion of child abuse. In responding to child safety concerns, Sacré Cœur will follow:

- The Victorian Government's Four Critical Actions for Schools for complaints and concerns relating to all forms of child abuse.
- Relevant School Child Safety, Student Wellbeing, Behaviour Management, and Safeguarding policies and procedures for complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence, harmful sexual behaviours, or other harmful student conduct.
- The Child Safe Standards, Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements, mandatory reporting obligations, and all other applicable legislative and regulatory requirements.

The safety, wellbeing, and best interests of the child will be the primary consideration in all decision-making and actions undertaken by the School.

7.1 Responsibilities

Steps	Action
Step 1	Immediate Action If a staff member, volunteer, contractor or Board Member witnesses an incident, receives a disclosure, forms a reasonable belief or suspicion, or becomes aware of an allegation of child abuse, they must: • Prioritise the immediate safety and wellbeing of the child or young person • Remain calm and supportive when responding to a disclosure • Listen carefully and respectfully to the child • Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking up • Explain that the information cannot remain confidential and may need to be shared with people who can help keep them safe • Avoid asking leading questions, investigating the matter, or seeking additional information beyond what is necessary to clarify immediate safety concerns • Assess whether the child or any other person is at immediate risk of harm • Separate those involved where appropriate and safe to do so • Administer first aid within the scope of their training if required • Contact emergency services immediately where urgent police, ambulance or medical assistance is required • Notify the Child Safety Officer or a member of the Leadership Team as soon as possible • Report all concerns, even where there is uncertainty as to whether child abuse has occurred

	• If the Child Safety Officer is unavailable, notify the Director of Student Wellbeing • If the concern involves a member of the Leadership Team, notify the Principal • If the concern involves the Principal, notify the Chair of the Board
Step 2	Reporting to Authorities and Referring to Services The Child Safety Officer (or delegate) must: • Ensure all relevant reporting obligations are met as soon as possible • Assess the information available and determine appropriate reporting pathways • Report concerns to DFFH Child Protection where a child is believed to need protection • Report criminal conduct or suspected criminal conduct to Victoria Police • Report reportable conduct allegations involving staff, volunteers, contractors or Board Members to the Principal • Ensure allegations involving the Principal are reported to the Chair of the Board • Consult with relevant authorities where advice is required • Make referrals to appropriate support services where required • Consider referrals to The Orange Door, Child FIRST, sexual assault services, harmful sexual behaviour services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, family support services, or other specialist agencies • Ensure reports are not delayed while additional information is gathered All staff members must: • Comply with their individual legal reporting obligations • Make a report directly to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police where they reasonably believe a child needs protection and cannot confirm that a report has already been made • Make a report if they disagree with a decision not to report
Step 3	Contacting Parents/Caregivers The Director of Student Wellbeing, Child Safety Officer, or a member of the Leadership Team must: • Determine whether and when parents/caregivers should be informed. Consult with DFFH Child Protection, Victoria Police or other relevant authorities before contacting parents or caregivers where appropriate • Ensure parents/caregivers are notified unless doing so may place the child or another person at risk, compromise an investigation, be contrary to advice provided by relevant authorities and ensure all decisions are guided by the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child
Step 4	Ongoing Protection and Support The Director of Student Wellbeing, Child Safety Officer, or a member of the Leadership Team must: • Take reasonable steps to protect the child and any other children from further harm • Consult with DFFH Child Protection, Victoria Police and other relevant agencies regarding ongoing safety measures • Develop and implement safety plans where required. • Arrange appropriate wellbeing and counselling support • Consider adjustments to learning, attendance, or other school arrangements where required • Monitor the ongoing safety and wellbeing of affected students • Ensure support provided is trauma-informed, culturally safe, child-centred and responsive to individual needs

	• Implement behaviour management and support strategies for student-to-student incidents • Make further reports to authorities if new information becomes available or additional incidents occur
Step 5	Recordkeeping The Director of Student Wellbeing, Child Safety Officer, or a member of the Leadership Team must: • Ensure all incidents, disclosures, allegations, suspicions and concerns are documented • Use the appropriate child safety reporting templates and systems • Record all actions taken by the School • Record all reports made to external agencies • Record communications with students, families and relevant authorities • Ensure records are objective, factual, accurate and timely • Ensure records are dated and securely stored • Maintain confidentiality and comply with privacy and record management requirements
Step 6	For School Visitors and Community Members School visitors and community members should: • Be aware that all adults have legal obligations relating to child safety • Report concerns directly to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police where appropriate • Notify the School of concerns relating to a student's safety where possible • Report concerns to the Child Safety Officer, Director of Student Wellbeing, School Psychologist, Year Level Coordinator or Principal • Cooperate with any child safety processes where required
Step 7	Additional Requirements for All Staff All staff members must: • Act in accordance with their duty of care obligations • Take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students • Comply with all child safety, mandatory reporting and information sharing obligations • Escalate concerns where they believe a child remains at risk • Raise concerns with the Director of Student Wellbeing or the Child Safety Officer in the first instance • Escalate concerns to the Principal if they remain unsatisfied with the response • Make a report directly to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police if they cannot confirm that a report has been made • Cooperate with investigations conducted by the School or external authorities • Maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of all parties involved • Participate in any required training, support or follow-up actions arising from the incident • No staff member will be disadvantaged, victimised or subject to adverse action for making a child safety report or raising a concern in good faith

8. Communication

This procedure will be communicated to the Sacré Cœur community through a range of channels to ensure awareness, understanding, and compliance with child safety obligations. This includes:

- Being publicly available on the School website.

- Being published and promoted to students, families, staff, volunteers, contractors, and Board Members through School communication platforms, including SchoolBox, newsletters, and staff and student bulletins.
- Being included in staff induction programs and annual child safety training.
- Being included in volunteer, contractor, and Board Member induction processes, where relevant.
- Being discussed and reinforced through staff meetings, professional learning opportunities, and child safety updates.
- Being made available to all members of the School community upon request.
- Being incorporated into child safety awareness and education initiatives for students, where appropriate.
- Being reviewed regularly to ensure ongoing compliance with legislative requirements, the Child Safe Standards, and best practice child safeguarding principles.

APPENDIX 1 – 4 CRITICAL ACTIONS



4 CRITICAL ACTIONS

● Identify | ▲ Report | ● Support | ■ Refer

Identify and respond to child abuse by an adult engaged by a Catholic school, including grooming

Provide the right support at the right time

At all times, you must:

- Respond to an emergency – Call 000. Preserve evidence. Keep students safe.
- Adapt to changing circumstances – Be flexible. Repeat/take different actions.
- Document your actions.

● Identify child abuse

All staff

You can identify abuse by:

- witnessing grooming behaviours or an incident
- receiving a disclosure
- observing:
 - physical or behavioural signs
 - something concerning online or on a device.

Notify your school's nominated contact person if you become aware of any allegation, complaint, disclosure or concern that:

- an adult engaged by the school may be abusing a child, or
- a child is at risk of being abused.

▲ Report abuse to authorities

The school's nominated contact person manages reports.

If you believe a crime has been committed against a child, report to:

- Victoria Police.

Any allegations, complaints, disclosures and concerns, report to your school's relevant governing body as soon as possible.

Report any allegations, complaints, disclosures or concerns about principals to your school's relevant governing body.

Engage parents/carers

- Obtain clearance from Victoria Police (if involved) or your school's relevant governing body before contacting parents/carers on what can be shared.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible (same day preferred).

Sexual offences

- Your school's relevant governing body will work with the school and health and wellbeing staff to lead ● Support and ■ Refer.

Other matters

- Your school's nominated contact person or wellbeing team may lead ● Support and ■ Refer.

● Support students through your school

- Support impacted student/s.
- Arrange support for impacted students and staff through regional/centralised services.
- Engage students and parents/carers to find the best support.
- Tailor to diverse needs.
- Use information sharing.
- Continue as long as necessary.

■ Refer to community services

- Engage student/s and parents/carers to find and connect with suitable services.
- Use information sharing.

Key contacts

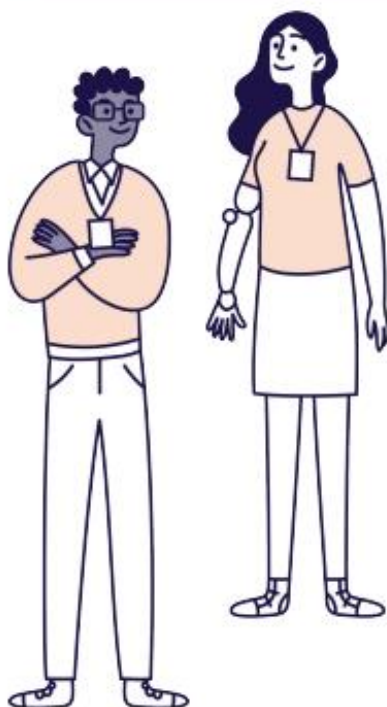
Victoria Police

- 000 (emergencies)
- 131 444 or local police station (non-emergencies)

Local sexual assault service



School governing body



vic.gov.au/identify-abuse-adult-catholic-school



Identify and respond to student-to-student abuse

Provide the right support at the right time

At all times, you must:

- **Respond to an emergency** – Call 000. Preserve evidence. Keep students safe.
- **Adapt to changing circumstances** – Be flexible. Repeat/take different actions.
- **Document your actions.**

Identify child abuse

All staff

You can identify abuse by:

- witnessing an incident
- receiving a disclosure
- observing:
 - physical or behavioural signs
 - something concerning online or on a device.

If you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being abused (including harmful sexual behaviour), inform school leadership.

Information Sharing staff/Child Link users

- Request information from Information Sharing Entities or check Child Link.

School leadership/nominated staff

- **Report**
- **Support** and **Refer**

You may need to take actions in support and refer at the same time.

Harmful sexual behaviour

Contact local sexual assault services for support and advice.

Report abuse to authorities

If you believe a crime against a child has been committed, report to:

- Victoria Police
 - your school's relevant governing body.
- If the student is under the age of criminal responsibility/not a Victoria Police matter, report to:

- your school's relevant governing body.

For harmful online content, report to:

- esafety.gov.au/report

Engage parents/carers

- If Victoria Police are involved, seek their clearance on what can be shared before you contact parents/carers.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible (same day preferred).

Harmful sexual behaviour

- If Victoria Police are not involved, you can contact your local sexual assault service for advice to engage parents/carers.

Support students through your school

- Support impacted student/s.
- Engage students and parents/carers to find the best support.
- Tailor to diverse needs.
- Use information sharing.
- Continue as long as necessary.

Refer to community services

- Engage student/s and parents/carers to find and connect with suitable services.
- Use information sharing.

Harmful sexual behaviour

- Contact your local sexual assault service for support for students and parents/carers.
- If a student is using harmful sexual behaviour and their parents/carers are not willing or able to help the student connect to a service, call Child Protection.

Key contacts

Child Protection
8:45am to 5pm, Mon-Fri
North 1300 598 521
South 1300 555 526
East 1300 360 452
West 1300 360 462
After hours 13 12 78

Victoria Police
→ 000 (emergencies)
→ 131 444 or local police station (non-emergencies)

eSafety Commissioner
→ esafety.gov.au/report

Local sexual assault service



School governing body



vic.gov.au/identify-student-to-student-abuse-schools



Victoria
Catholic
Education
Authority



Department
of Education

Identify and respond to child abuse in the family

Provide the right support at the right time

Identify child abuse

All staff

You can identify abuse by:

- witnessing an incident
- receiving a disclosure
- observing:
 - physical or behavioural signs
 - signs of family violence trauma in students
 - family violence risk factors
 - narratives and behaviours that may indicate an adult is using family violence
 - something concerning online or on a device.

You only need to collect enough information to form a reasonable belief or inform your next steps. If you form a reasonable belief:

- go to **Determine your pathway**
- Inform school leadership.

If you have a concern that a student is experiencing, or at risk of, child abuse in the family, and need more information:

- complete Family Violence Identification Tool
- provide to MARAM-nominated staff.

MARAM nominated staff

- complete Family Violence Screening Tool

If you form a reasonable belief that there is current family violence:

- Inform school leadership
- go to **Determine your pathway**
- complete Basic Safety Plan.

Information Sharing staff/Child Link users

- Request information from Information Sharing Entities or check Child Link.

At all times, you must:

- **Respond to an emergency** – Call 000. Preserve evidence. Keep students safe.
- **Adapt to changing circumstances** – Be flexible. Repeat/take different actions.
- **Document your actions.**

Determine your pathway

Report to Child Protection (including mandatory report)

- **Report**
- **Support** and **Refer**

Crime

- **Report**
- **Support** and **Refer**

Family violence

(not a mandatory report or crime)

- **Refer** then **Support**

Family struggling with the care, wellbeing or development of a child

- **Support** and **Refer**

You may need to take actions in support and refer at the same time.

If you are unsure which pathway to take, contact The Orange Door for advice.

Support students through your school

- Engage students and parents/carers to find the best support.
- Tailor to diverse needs.
- Use information sharing.
- Continue for as long as necessary.

Refer to community services

- Engage the student and parents/carers, and connect them to services:
 - the Orange Door for family violence or families struggling with care, wellbeing to development of a child. First Nations people can be supported by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.
 - local sexual assault services for sexual offences or harmful sexual behaviour.
- Use information sharing.

Key contacts

Child Protection

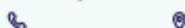
8:45am to 5pm, Mon-Fri

North	1300 598 521
South	1300 555 526
East	1300 360 452
West	1300 360 462
After hours	13 12 78

Victoria Police

- 000 (emergencies)
- 131 444 or local police station (non-emergencies)

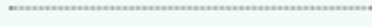
The Orange Door



Local sexual assault service



School governing body



Report abuse to authorities

Report to Child Protection (including mandatory report)

If you form a reasonable belief that the parents/carers have not, or are unlikely to, protect the student from significant harm. You must report physical and sexual abuse. Report to:

- Child Protection
- your school's relevant governing body.

Crime

If you believe a crime has been committed against a child, report to:

- Victoria Police
- your school's relevant governing body.

Engage parents/carers

- If Child Protection/Victoria Police are involved, seek their clearance on what can be shared before you contact parents/carers.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible (same day preferred).

vic.gov.au/identify-child-abuse-family



Identify and respond to child abuse in the community

Provide the right support at the right time

At all times, you must:

- **Respond to an emergency** – Call 000. Preserve evidence. Keep students safe.
- **Adapt to changing circumstances** – Be flexible. Repeat/take different actions.
- **Document your actions.**

Identify child abuse

All staff

You can identify abuse by:

- witnessing an incident
- receiving a disclosure
- observing:
 - physical or behavioural signs
 - something concerning online or on a device.

If you form a reasonable belief that a child has been abused, or is at risk of abuse, inform school leadership.

Information Sharing staff/Child Link users

- Request information from Information Sharing Entities or check Child Link.

School leadership/nominated staff

- **Report**
- **Support** and **Refer**

You may need to take actions in support and refer at the same time.

Report abuse to authorities

If you believe a crime has been committed against a child, report to:

- Victoria Police
 - your school's relevant governing body.
- If you form a reasonable belief that the parents/carers have not, or are unlikely to, protect the student from significant harm. You must report physical and sexual abuse. Report to:
- Child Protection
 - your school's relevant governing body.

Engage parents/carers

- If Victoria Police/Child Protection are involved, seek their clearance on what can be shared before you contact parents/carers.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible (same day preferred).

Support students through your school

- Support impacted student/s.
- Engage students and parents/carers to find the best support.
- Tailor to diverse needs.
- Use information sharing.
- Continue for as long as necessary.

Refer to community services

- Engage students and parent/carers to find and connect with suitable services.
- Use information sharing.



vic.gov.au/identify-child-abuse-community

Key contacts

Child Protection
8.45am to 5pm, Mon-Fri

North	1300 598 521
South	1300 555 526
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After hours	13 12 78

Victoria Police

- 000 (emergencies)
- 131 444 or local police station (non-emergencies)

The Orange Door

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Local sexual assault service

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School governing body

☎ _____

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APPENDIX 2 - POSSIBLE SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

1. What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse includes:

- Any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming
- Physical violence against a child
- Serious emotional or psychological harm against a child
- Serious neglect of a child

To help you identify child abuse as part of the 4 Critical Actions, the definitions and signs of each type of abuse are outlined below. The physical and behavioural signs listed below may indicate child abuse. They may be present due to other factors. It is important to view these signs in the context of what else you know about the child or young person. Any child or young person can experience abuse. Children and young people can experience multiple types of abuse at the same time.

The following child abuse scenarios are detailed below:

- Physical child abuse
- Child sexual abuse
- Grooming
- Child sexual exploitation
- Emotional or psychological child abuse
- Neglect
- Family Violence
- Forced marriage
- Change or suppression (conversion) practices
- Exposure to extreme violence
- Historical child abuse

2. Physical Child Abuse

Physical child abuse is the intentional infliction of physical injury or harm of a child. Physical child abuse can also occur when someone intentionally or recklessly causes a child to believe that physical force is about to be used against them without their consent. This includes the use of words or gestures that cause a child to believe that they are about to suffer physical violence. Examples of physical abuse may include:

- Hitting
- Punching
- Kicking
- Beating
- Pushing or throwing something that strikes a child
- Shaking or burning
- Assault with implements
- Female genital mutilation

Apprehended physical violence is when a child believes that someone is about to harm them. This can happen even if no one touches the child (for example: if someone hits an object near to a child, causing the child to fear they might be hit).

3. What to Look Out for in Students (Child Abuse and Physical Abuse)

Physical signs that may indicate physical child abuse include:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts, fractured bones, especially those:
 - Where the type of injury is unlikely to have occurred accidentally
 - That are not consistent with the explanation offered
 - Cuts and grazes to the mouth, lips, gums, eye area, ears, or external genitalia
 - Bald patches where hair may have been pulled out
 - Many multiple injuries - old and new

- Effects of poisoning (for example: nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, falling over, abdominal pain, fitting)
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints (for example: headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)
- Signs of internal injuries (for example: stomach aches, deep bruising, prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea, headaches)

Behavioural signs that may indicate physical child abuse include:

- Inconsistent or unlikely explanation
- Inability to remember the cause of an injury
- Being very passive and compliant
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Poor sleep patterns and emotional dysregulation (for example: appearing nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive, or destructive to self or others)
- Developmental regression (for example: bed-wetting)
- Wearing long-sleeved clothes on hot days to hide bruising or other injury
- Becoming fearful when other children cry or shout
- Being excessively clingy to certain adults
- A strong desire to please or receive validation from certain adults (for example: an overcommitment to excelling in academic or athletic performance)
- Unclear boundaries and understanding of relationships between adults and children
- Physical abuse or cruelty to others, including pets
- Eating disorders, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, or self-harm
- A change in usual behaviour

4. Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity. It includes sexual behaviours against, or near a child. It can include sexual activities that:

- A child does not understand
- A child does not or cannot consent to
- Are not accepted by the community
- Are unlawful

Child sexual abuse can take many forms and does not always involve physical contact. Examples of child sexual abuse include:

- Grooming
- Sexual or inappropriate touching
- Showing private parts or genitals
- Making a child pose, undress or do sexual or inappropriate acts
- Talking to a child in a sexual or inappropriate way
- Making a child look at sexual or inappropriate photos or films
- Making, sharing or possessing child exploitation material

Child sexual abuse can occur within families, by people in organisations and online:

- These can be people the child or young person may or may not know
- It can occur once or more than once

Child sexual offences include:

- Any sexual act between a person and a child under 16 years old under their care, supervision or authority
- Any sexual act involving a child under 12 years old
- Any sexual act involving a child between 12 and 15 years old, where the age difference is more than 2 years
- Any sexual act between an adult and a child under 16 years old
- A situation between two minors where one exerts power over the other
- This includes forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act

5. What to Look Out for in Students (Child Sexual Abuse)

Being aware of the signs of grooming can help protect children and young people from child sexual abuse. A child or young person may show signs of being a victim of grooming in different ways.

They may show all or some of the following signs:

- Developing an unusually close connection with an older person
- Having gifts or money from new friends or someone that they cannot account for
- Being very secretive about their phone, internet or social media use
- Going missing for long periods of time
- Appearing extremely tired, including at school
- Being dishonest about who they have been with and where they have been
- Substance misuse
- Assuming a new name, having false identification, a stolen passport or driver licence, or a new phone
- Being collected from school by an older or new friend

Physical signs may not be identifiable without a disclosure or an assessment by a health professional. Physical signs may include:

- Injury to the genital or rectal area (for example, bruising, bleeding, discharge, inflammation, infection)
- Injury to areas of the body such as breasts, buttocks or upper thighs
- Discomfort in urinating or defecating
- Presence of foreign bodies in the vagina or rectum
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Pregnancy, especially in young adolescents
- Anxiety-related illnesses (for example, eating disorders)

6. Grooming

Grooming is when an adult engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person under the age of 16 for future sexual activity. This can be with the groomer or with another adult. Grooming can occur face-to-face, online or a combination of both.

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

Children and young people are often groomed before they are sexually abused. Grooming does not always involve sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity. 'Grooming' includes a wide range of intentional behaviours that manipulate and control a child. These behaviours can also be used on the child's family, kin and carers, other support networks, or organisations. This is used to perpetrate child sexual abuse.

Grooming can also be used to exploit others for financial, criminal or terrorism purposes. This type of grooming is often characterised by emotional manipulation. The groomer builds trust and rapport with the child or young person for an undisclosed aim.

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. It is also a form of Reportable Conduct.

7. Common Grooming Behaviours

Grooming of a child or young person, online or in-person or a combination of both, may include:

- Building their trust, including through special attention or gifts
- Treating them like an adult to make them feel different and special
- Gaining the trust of their parents, family or carers
- Isolating them from supportive and protective family and friends
- Convincing them to use different online platforms to evade detection, including those using encrypted technologies

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- Coercing them, including through threats, stalking and asking them to keep secrets
- Manipulating them to blame themselves for the situation
- Non-sexual touching of the child or young person that develops into sexual behaviour over time

8. Common Stages of Grooming

There are a number of stages that may occur throughout the process of grooming. However, not all of these stages need to have occurred, and they may occur in any order.

- **The child or young person is targeted:** While any child can be sexually abused, some perpetrators may target children that are more vulnerable. For example, children and young people that are socially isolated or are part of a marginalised social, economic, racial or cultural group.
- **Building trust:** Perpetrators often present as trustworthy, reputable, generous, and likeable. They may build a child or young person's trust through special attention or gifts. In some situations, whole families or organisations can be groomed as a result of the perceived trustworthiness of a perpetrator.
- **Isolation:** Perpetrators may progressively isolate a child or young person from supportive family and friends. They may seek to fill roles in a child or young person's life that provide practical or emotional support.
- **Sexualisation:** Perpetrators may gradually introduce sexualised content or discussions to a child or young person in order to normalise this behaviour. They will often then exploit this to encourage or coerce the child to engage in sexual activity, produce child sexual abuse imagery or participate in sexualised in-person or virtual chats. This behaviour may escalate slowly or quickly.
- **Control:** Perpetrators often use secrecy, shame, blame, coercion and threats to maintain control in order to perpetuate the abuse and ensure the child or young person's silence.

Sometimes it is hard to see when someone is being groomed. Some grooming behaviour can look like 'normal' caring behaviour. If you have concerns about grooming, you must act by following the 4 Critical Actions.

9. What to Look Out for in Children (Grooming)

Behavioural signs that may indicate an adult is grooming a child include:

- Developing an unusually close connection with an older person
- Displaying mood changes, for example, hyperactive, secretive, hostile, aggressive, impatient, resentful, anxious, withdrawn, depressed
- Going missing for long periods
- Appearing at school extremely fatigued
- Being evasive or dishonest about where they have been and whom they have been with
- Spending less time with friends or changing friendship groups suddenly
- Having gifts or money from new friends that they cannot account for
- Being very secretive about their phone, internet and social media use
- Substance misuse
- Frequently staying out overnight, especially with an older person
- Assuming a new name, being in possession of false identification, a stolen passport or driver's licence
- Being picked up by an older or new friend from school

Some of these behavioural signs of grooming will not apply. Some will be different when a student is being groomed by an adult in the school environment. A student may not always understand that they are being groomed. They may be manipulated into believing that:

- They have brought the abuse on themselves

- They are in control, but the adult who is grooming them is slowly gaining more control
- The grooming is an expression of love

10. What to Look Out for in Adults (Grooming)

Behavioural signs that may indicate an adult is grooming a student include:

- Asking children and young people to keep secrets
- Relying on online or mobile phone communication and avoiding meeting face-to-face
- Overstepping social boundaries, for example, turning up uninvited.
- Telling children about their personal and/or romantic problems
- Interrupting conversations other adults are having with the child or speaking for the child
- Offering to do chores or repairs around the family house
- Offering to babysit the child
- Offering to take the child to activities, for example, sports, camping
- Offering to tutor, mentor or coach the child one-on-one
- Offering to drive the child to and from school/activities
- Inappropriate preferential treatment of child, for example, giving gifts
- Openly or pretending to accidentally expose the child to nudity
- Contacting the child via social media or private phone
- Fostering a close relationship with the caregivers, which may be flirtatious or romantic
- Flattering caregivers
- Showing an excessive interest in the child's activities, wellbeing, school grades or other areas of a child's life

Adults who are grooming children may:

- Rely on mobile phones, social media and the internet to interact with children in inappropriate ways
- Ask the child to keep their relationship a secret
- Continue the grooming process for months or years before sexually abusing the child or young person
- Continue with predatory conduct but not seek to sexually abuse a child

11. Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse. Child sexual exploitation can include:

- Organised exploitation and trafficking
- Use of technology or the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse of a child (for example: the production and sharing of child sexual abuse material online)
- Blackmail
- Forced marriage
- Child sexual slavery
- Prostitution
- Creation, sharing and possession of child sexual abuse material
- Procuring other children or young people on behalf of the exploiter

People engaged in child sexual exploitation use their power over a child or young person to sexually or emotionally abuse them. They can be highly secretive and can use false identities. Offenders can provide children or young people with something in exchange for participating in sexual activities. This could include food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts or money. Exploitation can occur in person or online. Sometimes the child or young person might not know they are a victim. There are other forms of child exploitation that may not be sexual. These may include unlawful drug trafficking, child labour, military activity or terrorism.

12. What to Look Out for in Students (Child Sexual Exploitation)

Child sexual exploitation can be hard to identify, however there are warning signs. Behavioural signs that may indicate a child is being exploited include:

- Regular absences from school, missing training, work or other activities
- Going missing for long periods or appearing at school extremely fatigued
- Being evasive or dishonest about where they've been and whom they've been with
- Developing an unusually close connection with an older person
- Displaying mood changes (for example: hyperactive, secretive, aggressive, anxious, withdrawn)
- Using street or different language or copying the way a new friend may speak
- Talking about new friends who don't belong to their normal social circle
- Presenting at school with gifts or money given by new friends
- Having large amounts of money, which they cannot account for
- Using a new mobile phone (possibly given to them by a new friend)
- Excessively making calls, videos or sending text messages
- Being very secretive about their phone, internet and social media use
- Using drugs (for example: physical evidence includes spoons, aluminium foil, 'tabs', 'rocks' or pieces of ripped cardboard)
- Assuming a new name, being in possession of false identification, a stolen passport or driver's licence
- Being picked up by an older or new friend from school or down the street
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- Unwillingness to discuss their views
- Sudden disrespectful attitude towards others

Any child or young person of any age or background can be a victim of sexual exploitation. Children who are isolated, have fewer connections to trusted adults and less confidence or ability to speak out are more likely to be exploited. Signs in their relationships may indicate a student may be exposed to sexual exploitation. You may notice or students may disclose:

- Threats to end their relationship if they don't have sex
- Demands that they have sex with other people
- Expectations to provide sex in return for food, a place to stay, drugs or gifts
- Threats to cease the relationship if sexual 'dares' are not carried out
- Receiving money in return for sexual acts
- Requests to provide sexual photos or sharing sexual photos online or via text
- Threats to humiliate or share sexual images of victims if they don't carry out sexual acts

13. What to Look Out for in People Exploiting Children

People who are exploiting children may:

- Rely on mobile phones, social media and the internet to interact with children in inappropriate ways
- Often ask the child to keep their contact secret
- Engage in a grooming process for months before arranging a physical meeting
- Form an inappropriate relationship where they exercise power or control over a young person
- There may be a significant age gap
- The victim may believe they are in a loving relationship or friendship initially, but the relationship then changes and the offender uses their power over the young person to coerce, intimidate and continue the abuse
- Often not act alone and may work with other adults or enlist children to recruit more children and young people to exploit

14. Emotional or Psychological Child Abuse

Emotional or psychological child abuse is when someone deliberately and repeatedly causes a child emotional distress. This can be caused when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, or frightened by threats. It includes hostility, derogatory name-calling, put-downs and persistent coldness from a

person. This behaviour is likely to impact on the emotional health and development of a child. Emotional or psychological abuse is the most common type of child abuse.

Emotional or psychological abuse can include:

- Forcing a child to be humiliated or to perform a degrading act
- Scaring or causing a child to be fearful
- Rejecting or telling a child they are worthless, unwanted or unloved
- Undermining, blaming, scapegoating
- Constant criticism or unrealistic expectations
- Name calling, threats, making fun of the child
- Isolating a child from opportunities to learn, interactions with others
- Withholding attention, ignoring or never showing affection
- Discrimination, including being treated unfairly because of who you are or what you like
- Cultural abuse, when a child's culture is ignored, denigrated or intentionally attacked
- Racism
- Experiences of distressing events including family violence, other types of violence and drug use
- Bullying

15. What to Look Out for in Students (Emotional or Psychological Child Abuse)

Physical signs that may indicate emotional or psychological child abuse include:

- Speech disorders (for example: language delay, stuttering, the child being selectively mute or only speaking with certain people or in certain situations)
- Delays in emotional, mental, or physical development

Behavioural signs that may indicate emotional or psychological child abuse include:

- Lack of apparent connection with parents
- Overly affectionate or clingy with strangers
- Anxious or vigilant disposition
- Emotional outbursts
- Problems interacting with other children appropriately
- Overly compliant, passive, and undemanding behaviour
- Behaviours that may be interpreted as demanding, aggressive or attention seeking
- Poor self-image and low self-esteem
- Unexplained mood swings, depression, self-harm, or suicidal thoughts
- Behaviours that are not age-appropriate (for example, overly adult or overly infantile)
- Fear of failure, overly high standards, and excessive neatness
- Poor social and interpersonal skills
- Violent drawings or writing
- Lack of positive social contact with other children

16. Neglect

Neglect is a failure to provide a child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision. Neglect can be immediate or cumulative. The neglect of a child:

- Can place the child's immediate safety and development at serious risk or
- May not immediately compromise the safety of a child but may result in longer term cumulative harm

Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, adults engaged by the school can show neglectful behaviours in different ways. This neglect may result in a failure to meet a child's basic needs. These include:

- Supervisory neglect
- Physical neglect
- Educational neglect
- Emotional neglect

17. Severity of Neglect

The law differentiates between three different levels of neglect:

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- **'Minor'** neglect is low-level neglect that is trivial or temporary
- **'Significant'** neglect is medium-level neglect (which causes harm to a child that is more than trivial or temporary)
- **'Serious'** neglect is the highest level of neglect. It involves the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. This may include cases where the health or physical development of a child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child. This includes where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations.

18. Types of Neglect

Some neglectful behaviours that can occur include:

- **Supervisory Neglect:** Inattention by caregivers that can lead to physical harm, injury, sexual abuse or criminal behaviour (this may also include not acting appropriately in relation to alleged abuse of a child)
- **Physical Neglect:** Failure to provide physical necessities like food, clothing or shelter
- **Medical Neglect:** Failure to provide or seek adequate medical care
- **Educational Neglect:** Failure to provide a formal education either via school or registered home schooling (in addition, preventing a child from gaining a school education without reasonable justification)
- **Emotional Neglect:** Failure to provide adequate nurturing, affection, encouragement and support for a child
- **Abandonment:** Leaving a child alone, in the care of another child or adult who is intoxicated or incapable of caring for a child for an unreasonable period

19. What to Look Out for in Students (Neglect)

Physical signs that may indicate neglect include:

- Being consistently hungry, tired, and zoned out
- Appearing withdrawn, pale and weak
- Having unattended health problems and a lack of routine medical care
- Untreated dental issues
- Appearing consistently dirty and unwashed
- Being consistently inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
- Having inadequate shelter and unsafe or unsanitary conditions

Behavioural signs that may indicate neglect include:

- Poor, irregular, or non-attendance at school
- Gorging when food is available or inability to eat when extremely hungry
- Asking or begging for, or stealing, food
- Aggressive behaviour or irritability
- Involvement in criminal activity
- Little positive interaction with a parent, carer, or guardian
- Excessive friendliness towards strangers
- Indiscriminate acts of affection
- Staying at school for long hours and refusing or being reluctant to go home
- Self-destructive behaviour
- Taking on an adult role of caring for parents

20. Family Violence

The *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) defines family violence as behaviour towards a current or former family member or intimate partner where the behaviour:

- Is physically or sexually abusive
- Is emotionally or psychologically abusive
- Is economically abusive
- Is threatening
- Is coercive

- In any other way controls or dominates the family member or intimate partner and causes that person to feel fear for their safety or wellbeing or that of another person or pet

A child or young person can be the victim of any of these behaviours. Family violence includes behaviour that causes a child or young person to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to, these behaviours. Children with previous experience of family violence are particularly vulnerable to further harm. This includes within the family and from other sources. Intimate partners include:

- Spouses or domestic partners
- People who are dating
- People in intimate relationships (this may be more temporary or fluid in nature, which are more common among younger people)

21. Observable Signs of Trauma that may indicate Family Violence for:

- Rebelliousness, defiant behaviour
- Limited tolerance and poor impulse control
- Temper tantrums or irritability, being aggressive or demanding
- Physical abuse or cruelty of others, including pets
- Avoidance of conflict
- Showing low self-esteem
- Extremely compliant behaviour, being passive, tearful or withdrawn
- Excessively oppositional or argumentative behaviour
- Risk-taking behaviours that have severe or life-threatening consequences
- Lack of interest in social activities
- Delayed or poor language skills*
- Experiencing problems with schoolwork
- Poor social competence (few or no friends, not getting on well with peers, difficulties relating to adults)
- Acting like a much younger child
- Poor school performance
- Poor coping skills
- Excessive washing
- Frequent illness
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- Self-harm
- Displaying maladaptive behaviour
- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge unusual for the child's age
- Telling someone sexual abuse has occurred
- Complaining of pain going to the toilet
- Enacting sexual behaviour with other children
- Excessive masturbation.

Other signs could include:

- School refusal or avoidance (absenteeism or disengagement)
- Criminal or antisocial behaviours, including using violence against others
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation
- Risk-taking behaviours
- Anxiety
- Pregnancy
- Controlling or manipulative behaviour
- Obsessive behaviour
- Homelessness or frequent changes in housing arrangements.

22. Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is when a person gets married without freely and fully consenting. This happens because:

- They have been coerced, threatened or deceived
- They are incapable of understanding the nature and effect of a marriage ceremony
- They can't consent because of age or mental capacity

It includes marriage-like relationships where the marriage is not registered. For example, cultural or religious marriages. In some cases, people go overseas without knowing that it's for their own marriage. Their family may hold their passport to stop them from returning home. Forced marriage is a crime in Australia. It is against the law to force someone to get married or to help make this happen. Forced marriages are different from arranged marriages. In an arranged marriage, the families may choose the partners, but both individuals choose to enter the marriage. Forced marriage is an offence on its own and does not need to rely on slavery or human trafficking laws.

23. What to Look Out for in Students (Forced Marriage)

Anyone can be a victim of forced marriage, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, age, gender or sexual orientation. Men and boys can be victims of forced marriage. However, most reported victims are young women and girls. A change in behaviour may be the only indicator that a child or young person is a victim of forced marriage. Signs that may indicate forced marriage include:

- A sudden announcement that the child or young person is engaged
- A sudden announcement that the child or young will be leaving the country whilst siblings remain
- A sudden change in domestic arrangements
- Their older brothers or sisters stopped going to school or were married early
 - They are highly controlled by family or community members in and outside of home, for example: being the target of surveillance, always accompanied, limited or no control of finances and limited or no control over life decisions, education and career choices
- They have their communications monitored or restricted
- They are anxious, scared or nervous about an upcoming family holiday overseas
- They demonstrate feelings of conflict or concern for the ramifications if they do not go ahead with an agreed marriage or engagement
- They express concern of physical or psychological violence for not fulfilling family or community expectations
- They spend a long time away from school
- They do not come to, or suddenly withdraw from, school
- Depression, self-harming, social isolation, substance abuse
- Family disputes or conflict, family violence, abuse or running away from home.

24. Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices

Change or suppression (conversion) practices are deeply harmful practices which seek to change or hide an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. The [Change or Suppression \(Conversion\) Practices Prohibition Act 2021](#) bans change or suppression practices and provides a range of options for preventing and responding to them.

Under the Act, a change or suppression (conversion) practice means conduct:

- Directed at an individual with or without their consent
- Because of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- With the intention to change or induce that person to change or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity

Practices are based on the ideology that there is something wrong with or broken about people with diverse sexualities or gender identities. Practices can include:

- Teachings
- Counselling
- Spiritual care activities
- Other psychological or medical interventions.

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For more information, refer to the [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](#).

25. Exposure to Violent Extremism

Violent extremism refers to a person or group who is willing to use violence, or advocates the use of violence by others, to achieve a political, ideological or religious goal. Radicalisation is the process where a person becomes extreme in their thinking and behaviour. Violent extremist organisations and individuals sometimes target and influence children and young people during vulnerable periods in their development. Children and young people may be exposed to violent extremist views, materials and ideologies. Children and young people are at risk of exploitation and harm in these situations.

26. What to Look Out for in Students (Violent Extremism)

Children and young people who are at risk of radicalisation may have experienced a significant negative experience or be victims of bullying or discrimination. They may feel:

- Isolated and lonely or wanting to belong
- Unhappy about themselves and what others might think of them
- Embarrassed or judged about their culture, gender, religion or race
- Stressed or depressed
- Fed up with being bullied or treated badly by other people or by society
- Angry at other people or the government
- Confused about what they are doing
- Pressured to stand up for other people who are being oppressed

Radicalisation can be difficult to spot. Signs that may indicate a child or young person is being radicalised include:

- A change in behaviour
- A relatively sudden change in their worldview
- Changing their circle of friends
- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- Unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- Increased levels of anger
- Increased secretiveness, especially around internet use
- Accessing extremist material online
- Using extremist or hate terms to exclude others or incite violence
- Writing or creating artwork promoting violent extremist messages

27. Historical Child Abuse

For the purpose of Sacré Cœur's PROTECT procedure, historical child abuse refers to any type of child abuse that happened to a former student when they were at school, where that former student is now an adult. Historical child abuse may be reportable conduct. The term 'historical child abuse' only refers to the date of the abuse. It does not change the seriousness of the abuse. There is no time limit to report child abuse. Historical child abuse might include child sexual abuse that happened in the School many years or decades ago. It could also involve more recent incidents, reported only after the student had completed their schooling. A former student of Sacré Cœur may be a victim of historical child sexual abuse. The former student should contact the Principal of the school in the first instance in relation to their allegations. Department of Education and Training: [Identify child abuse by an adult engaged by a Catholic school vic.gov.au](#)

APPENDIX 3 – CHILD ABUSE (SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE NEEDS)

1. Child Abuse – Diverse Needs

All students who experience child abuse need support. Some students are at higher risk of abuse. They may need tailored support. A student's identity or background must not impact a decision to report abuse. You must be sensitive to each student's circumstances. Understanding a student's individual needs helps you provide the right support. Some students are more vulnerable based on attributes such as:

- Having a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- Disability
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Being an international student
- Being unable to live at home
- Being Aboriginal

Students can have more than one of these attributes. This can make them more vulnerable to overlapping forms of discrimination or disadvantage.

2. Students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds

When supporting students from CALD backgrounds affected by child abuse, consider the following. Some factors that may impact students include:

- Their cultural beliefs and practices
- Their role in the family – some children take on a parent-like role to support their family
- Their communication skills in each language they speak
- Cultural beliefs or norms around disability – the student may need specialist CALD support services
- Experiences of discrimination or racism
- Difficulty accessing services
- Distrust of government authorities
- Concerns about how reporting may impact their visa
- Overlapping barriers or disadvantages

You should use an accredited interpreter or translator when:

- A person asks for an interpreter
- You cannot understand what the person is saying
- The person does not fully understand what is being said in English

Always maintain confidentiality when engaging with translation services. People from small language groups may have concerns about privacy. They may not feel confident that interpreters and translators can keep information confidential. You must provide confidential translation services to parents and carers who have limited or no English. Do not use family members. In some cases, school staff may help as translators or interpreters. Staff members should not interpret if the situation is:

- High-risk
- Beyond their professional ability
- Beyond their language skills.

3. Students from the Deaf Community

Students from the Deaf Community impacted by child abuse need specialist support. Professionals who work with Deaf families understand cultural and language needs. They can help choose the most suitable intervention.

4. Students from Refugee Backgrounds

Students from refugee backgrounds impacted by child abuse may have existing trauma. This trauma can impact both the student and their family. It may come from:

- Exposure to violence
- Loss
- Persecution
- Forced displacement
- Long and complex resettlement processes

To support students from refugee backgrounds, consider:

- The student's past experiences of trauma
- Their family wellbeing
- How trauma may impact a parent or carer's ability to provide care

Use an accredited interpreter or translator when:

- A person asks for an interpreter
- You cannot understand what the person is saying
- The person does not understand what is being said in English

5. International Students

To support international students affected by child abuse, consider:

- Cultural norms that may impact reporting
- Isolation from family and peers in home country
- Wellbeing and accommodation arrangements
- The student's available support networks
- Whether an interpreter is needed
- Overlapping barriers or disadvantages.

International Students may hesitate to disclose child abuse. They may fear it will impact their visa. Family pressure and cultural norms can also discourage reporting. Tell students that it is safe to disclose abuse. Consider cultural norms when communicating with parents and carers of international students. Some families may have different understandings of what child abuse is.

6. Students with Disability

To support a student with disability impacted by child abuse, consider:

- Their communication needs, including listening devices or interpreters
- Cognitive abilities that may impact decision-making
- Preferred language
- Physical vulnerabilities
- Family and living situation, including out-of-home care
- Vulnerability to ongoing abuse
- Changes in behaviour – some students may need specialised professional support
- Overlapping barriers or disadvantages

7. Recognising Changes in Behaviour

You should also consider:

- Signs and indicators of abuse or harm
- Changes to usual behaviours linked to a disability (for example, an autistic student might stim more than usual to self-regulate under stress)
- Behaviours seen in a previous school or setting, especially if staff do not know the student well
- Behaviour changes in response to trauma or triggering events
- Signs of distress, such as fear of the perpetrator or difficulty talking about the abuse
- How a student with disability may communicate that they feel unsafe
- Support strategies that match their developmental needs – work with their service providers where possible

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8. Support Planning and Supervision

Review and update the student's support plans (this may include a Student Behaviour Support Plan). Also review supervision arrangements in all settings, including classrooms, transitions, playground, and transport.

9. LGBTIQA+ Students

This includes people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer or asexual. To support LGBTIQA+ students impacted by child abuse, consider:

- The unique forms of abuse LGBTIQA+ people may face, including:
- Family violence targeted at their sexuality, gender identity or expression, or intersex status
- Change or suppression (conversion) practices

LGBTIQA+ students may also experience:

- Discrimination or harassment at school and in the community related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics or intersex status
- Difficulty accessing services, particularly in regional and rural areas
- Lack of peer, community or family support
- Reluctance to report abuse because they fear being outed. Students may worry their sexuality, or gender identity could be shared without consent, or before they are ready.

Consider:

- Who the student has disclosed their identity to. This includes sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics or intersex status
- Who they feel comfortable knowing this information
- Any intersectional experiences

Schools must ensure their policies and practices are inclusive of LGBTIQA+ students. Schools must support LGBTIQA+ students to be safe and supported at school. School staff must follow the School's Privacy Policy. You can disclose the student's sexuality or gender identity only with their consent.

10. Students in Out-of-Home Care

Some students can't live at home. They may live in out-of-home care. This can be statutory or informal. Statutory out-of-home care includes:

- Foster care
- Kinship care
- Permanent care
- Residential care
- Lead tenant arrangements established through a court order

Informal out-of-home care is an arrangement without a legal order. Students living in out-of-home care arrangements have often experienced trauma and dislocation. When supporting students in out-of-home care impacted by child abuse, consider:

- Earlier experiences of child abuse that may have led to their placement in care
- How past trauma may impact behaviour or reactions
- Fear of further changes to their living arrangements
- How engaged they are at school and any changes to their attendance or participation and educational outcomes
- How accommodation arrangements impact them
- Travel distance and transport to and from school
- Lack of peer, community or family connection and support
- Any intersectional experiences

For students in statutory out-of-home care, contact the student's case manager.

11. First Nations People

To support First Nations people impacted by child abuse, consider the following:

Cultural safety:

Consider:

- Whether they feel school is culturally safe
- Experiences of discrimination and racism
- Trauma passed down through families
- Whether they feel comfortable speaking with school staff
- Whether they feel comfortable being themselves
- Whether they feel unable to express their individuality

Trust and engagement:

First Nations people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. This is also true of Child Protection and Out of Home Care.

Consider:

- Suspicion of government authorities
- Distrust of authorities
- Fear of repercussions
- Connection to their First Nations community
- Kinship and family situation
- How engaged they are at school and any changes to their attendance or participation

Access to services:

First Nations people may have difficulty getting support services.

Consider:

- Whether services are available
- Whether services offer a culturally safe experience
- any intersectional experiences.

Schools must provide culturally safe and appropriate support for First Nations students. This is critical if a child has been impacted by child abuse. You should be aware of the ongoing effects of the Stolen Generations and intergenerational trauma. Cultural safety means a safe, nurturing and positive environment where First Nations students:

- Feel comfortable being themselves
- Are encouraged to share who they are and their identity
- Feel comfortable expressing their culture, including spiritual beliefs
- Know their Aboriginality is respected

APPENDIX 4 – TEMPLATES FOR INVESTIGATIONS

The following pages provides templates from the VCEA which can be used during a child abuse investigation.

The four templates are as follows:

- [Identify and respond to child abuse by an adult engaged in a Catholic school, including grooming](#)
- [Student-to-Student Abuse](#)
- [In the Family Abuse](#)
- [In the Community Abuse](#)

Identify and respond to child abuse by an adult engaged in a Catholic school, including grooming

A template for Victorian Catholic schools

Instructions for school staff to complete this template

When	Use this template: - to document any allegation, complaint, disclosure or concern that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused (including grooming). - with the 4 Critical Actions to Identify and Respond to Child Abuse: Adult engaged by a Catholic school. - to record actions you have taken. It does not replace the need to follow the 4 Critical Actions immediately. Do not delay taking action to complete this template.
Why	You must document your actions. If you use this template, it will become the official record of the incident. If you do not use a template provided, you must still ensure you collect, record and securely retain all the information required in the template. Recorded information may inform reports, be requested in court proceedings, and support your decisions if evidence is required.
How	Record details factually. Avoid opinions or conclusions and provide as much information as possible. Schools must record all: - observations - disclosures - other details that led them to have a concern about child abuse - the school's response.
Record Management	Records must be kept in a secure, logical place to ensure future access. All Catholic schools should follow their policy and procedure to document and report all child safety incidents to school leadership and their relevant governing body. For further guidance see 4 Critical Actions: Document your actions.
Need help?	If you need additional support to complete this template, you can consult: - a member of your student wellbeing or leadership team support and advisory services for school staff
More information	Visit www.vic.gov.au/PROTECT to access guidance to identify and respond to child abuse by an adult engaged by a Catholic school.

Staff member leading the response

Staff Member	
Name and role	
School name	
School address/campus	
Relationship to student	

Staff member completing this template, if different to above

Staff Member	
Name and role	
School name	
School address/campus	
Relationship to student	

Student details

For additional student and parent/carer information consult your student management system.

Student	
Full name	
Year level	
Date of birth	

Responding to an emergency

See [responding to an emergency](#).

Use this section to document how you responded to an emergency, if applicable.

Details	
Have you responded to an emergency?	☐ Not applicable – continue to identify child abuse ☐ Yes
Provide a brief description of the emergency	
Did the student require first aid? If yes, please describe	
Who administered first aid?	
Did the student require further immediate medical assistance?	
Current location and safety status E.g. are all impacted students safe and not in any immediate danger	

4 Critical Actions: **identify** child abuse

See [identify child abuse](#).

You can identify abuse (including grooming) by an adult engaged by a Catholic school in many ways. You can:

- witness grooming behaviours or an incident
- [receive a disclosure](#) (including information from a third party)
- [observe physical or behavioural signs](#)
- see something worrying or problematic online and/or on a student's or adult's device.

Details of the allegation, complaint, disclosure or concern of abuse (including grooming) by an adult engaged by a school

Include detail of the allegation, complaint, disclosure or concern

- Include names, times and dates
- For disclosures document the student/s exact words as far as possible

Physical indicators
See [types of abuse and what to look for](#)

Behavioural Indicators
See [types of abuse and what to look for](#)

Were there any patterns of behaviour/prior concerns before the incident, disclosure or concern?

Details of the persons alleged to have engaged in the behaviour

Name

Relationship to student

Contact details

4 Critical Actions: **report** child abuse

See [report abuse to authorities](#). Use this section to document the child abuse you have reported.

Reporting to Victoria Police	
Who have you reported the allegations to?	☐ Victoria Police ☐ Decision not to report (provide reasons below)
Details of the report to Victoria Police	
Date	
Time	
Report to	
Outcome of the report	
If you have decided <u>not</u> to report to Victoria Police	
Detail why	
Any follow-up actions	

Notify your school's nominated contact person	
Who have you reported the allegations to? Name/position	
Date	
Time	
Discussion outcomes	
Your school's relevant governing body	
Contact your school's relevant governing body. They will advise you of the next actions consistent with your school's reporting policy. A list of school governing bodies can be found here .	
Date	
Time	
Outcome of the report	
Engage the student and their parents or carers	
Before engaging with parents and carers, you need clearance from:	
• Victoria Police (in situations involving a police response) • Your school's <u>relevant governing body</u>.	
Once you have clearance, you must contact the parents or carers as soon as possible. Ideally, this should happen on the same day.	
Have you sought advice from Victoria Police or relevant governing body?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Is it appropriate to contact parent/carer?	☐ Yes ☐ No
List reasons if it is not appropriate to contact parent/carer	
Name of staff member making the call	
Name of parent/carer receiving the call	
What information was shared?	
What information was not shared? Per advice from Victoria Police or relevant governing body	
Discussion outcomes	

4 Critical Actions: **refer** students to community services

See refer students to community services. Use this section to document the actions you have taken to refer a student to community services.

Planned Actions	
Who have you engaged to plan referrals?	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Other (specify) _____
If you haven't engaged with the students and/or parents or carers provide reasoning	
Which referrals have you suggested and/or the student and/or parents or carers requested?	
Which services has the student been referred to? Include detail on referrals to wellbeing professionals or other specialised services	
How did you support the student and parents or carers to engage with these services? Include if the school connected the student with the service or if they self-referred	
What information has been shared with other agencies or professionals? Include how you used information sharing and for what purpose, if applicable	

4 Critical Actions: **support** students through your school

See [support students through your school](#). Ensure you document the supports offered and implemented to **all impacted students**.

Planned Actions	
Who have you engaged to plan support?	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Allied health professionals ☐ Specialist support agency (specify) _____ ☐ Other (specify) _____
Does the student have any diverse needs? See supporting students with diverse needs This includes: • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students • students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds • international students • students with disability • LGBTIQA+ students • students in out-of-home care.	☐ No ☐ Yes – specify supports in place
What supports have the student and/or parents or carers have requested?	
Follow up actions Include detail on the follow-up actions taken to support the student	
Current supports in place	
Include how you used information sharing and for what purpose If applicable	

Review – student outcomes

Complete this section with your school leadership team 4-6 weeks after the allegation, complaint, disclosure or concern. This will support you and your school to continue to protect students in your care and to reflect on your processes and the need for any follow-up actions.

Current student safety and wellbeing	
Has the risk of abuse (including grooming) to the student been addressed or mitigated?	☐ Yes ☐ No, consider if you need to repeat one or more of the 4 Critical Actions, see adapt to changing circumstances ☐ Unsure
Does the student have any wellbeing issues that are not being addressed?	☐ Yes ☐ No
How will these issues be addressed?	
Are there other impacted students?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
If yes, how will their issues be addressed?	
Current wellbeing of impacted staff members	
Does the staff member/s who made the report/allegation/complaint, received a disclosure or had a concern require any support?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what support has been received?	

Review – significant child safety incident

After any significant child safety incident, your school must review its child safety policies, processes and practices and make improvements where needed.

For more details, see [reviewing child safety practices](#).

Review – 4 Critical Actions

Complete this section with your school leadership team 4-6 weeks after the allegation, complaint disclosure or concern. This section will help you determine if the school has followed the PROTECT 4 Critical Actions appropriately. If any required actions have not yet been taken, work with your school leadership team to ensure they are taken as soon as possible.

Implementation of the 4 Critical Actions

Please see below some questions to consider for the post-incident review

Identify

- Was an appropriate decision made in relation to when to act?
- Could the concern of abuse have been detected earlier?
- Did the school take appropriate action in an emergency?

Report

- Was a report made to the appropriate authorities and relevant governing body?
- Did the school contact the parents/carers as soon as possible?
- Have the parents continued to be engaged (if appropriate)?

Refer

- Did school staff refer the student to appropriate external services?

Were the student and parents/carers appropriately engaged in the referral process?

Support

- Were the student and parents/carers engaged to determine the right support?
- Has a student support group been established?
- Has the school provided appropriate support for the student?

Other

- If the student has diverse needs was this considered?
- Was the student appropriately supported in interviews?
- Have any complaints about how this was handled been received?
- Have these complaints been resolved?
- Were staff, students and parents kept informed of how their information will be managed throughout the management of the incident, including the referral process?

Learnings

Detail observations or learnings that could help strengthen processes to continue to protect students

Follow up actions

Detail any follow up actions from this review

Identify and respond to student-to-student abuse

A template for Victorian Catholic schools

Instructions for school staff to complete this template

When	Use this template: - to document any incident, disclosure or concern that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. - with the 4 Critical Actions to Identify and Respond to Child Abuse: student-to-student. - to record actions you have taken. It does not replace the need to follow the 4 Critical Actions immediately. Do not delay taking action to complete this template.
Why	You must document your actions. If you use this template, it will become the official record of the incident. If you do not use a template provided, you must still ensure you collect, record and securely retain all the information required in the template. Recorded information may inform reports, be requested in court proceedings, and support your decisions if evidence is required.
How	Record details factually. Avoid opinions or conclusions and provide as much information as possible. Schools must record all: - observations - disclosures - other details that led them to have a concern about child abuse the school's response. You must document your actions for all students involved who are enrolled at your school. This includes: - students who experienced abuse - students who use violence or engage in behaviour that causes harm. For matters involving more students, complete additional templates.
Record Management	Records must be kept in a secure, logical place to ensure future access. All Catholic schools should follow their policy and procedure to document and report all child safety incidents to school leadership and their relevant governing body. For further guidance see 4 Critical Actions: Document your actions.
Need help?	If you need additional support to complete this template, you can consult: - a member of your student wellbeing or leadership team support and advisory services for school staff.
More information	Visit www.vic.gov.au/PROTECT to access guidance to identify and respond to child abuse by another student.

Staff member leading the response	
Staff Member	
Name and role	
School name	
School address/campus	
Relationship to student	
Staff member completing this template, if different to above	
Staff Member	
Name and role	
School name	
School address/campus	
Relationship to student	

Student details

For additional student and parent/carer information consult your student management system.

	Student 1 – Student who experienced abuse	Student 2 – Student using violence or engaging in behaviour that causes harm
Full name		
Year level		
Date of birth		

Responding to an emergency

See [respond to an emergency](#).

Use this section to document how you responded to an emergency, if applicable.

Details	
Have you responded to an emergency?	☐ Not applicable – continue to identify child abuse ☐ Yes
Provide a brief description of the emergency	
Did the student require first aid? If yes, please describe	
Who administered first aid?	
Did the student require further immediate medical assistance?	
Is the child currently in a safe location? E.g. are all impacted students safe and not in any immediate danger	

4 Critical Actions: **identify** child abuse

See [identify child abuse](#).

You can identify abuse by another student in many ways. You can:

- witness an incident
- [receive a disclosure](#) (including information from a third party)
- [observe physical or behavioural signs](#)
- see something worrying or problematic online and/or on a student's device.

What has led you to have a concern or belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being abused by another student

Include detail of the incident, disclosure or concern • Include names, times and dates • Document the student/s exact words as far as possible	
Physical indicators See types of abuse and what to look for	
Behavioural Indicators See types of abuse and what to look for	
Were there any patterns of behaviour/prior concerns before the incident, disclosure or concern?	

4 Critical Actions: **report** child abuse

See [report abuse to authorities](#). Use this section to document the child abuse you have reported.

Reporting to authorities	
Who have you reported the allegations to?	☐ Victoria Police ☐ eSafety Commissioner ☐ Other (Specify) _____ ☐ Decision not to report (provide reasons below)
Details of the report to authorities	
Date	
Time	
Report to	
Outcome of the report	
Details of the report to authorities	
Date	
Time	
Report to	
Outcome of the report	
If you have decided <u>not</u> to report	
Detail why	
Any follow-up actions	

Reporting to school leadership		
Who have you reported to? Name/position		
Date		
Time		
Discussion outcomes		
Your school's relevant governing body		
Contact your principal advisory service or governing body. They will advise you of the next actions consistent with your school's reporting policy. A list of school governing bodies can be found here .		
Date		
Time		
Discussion outcomes		
Engage the student and their parents or carers		
If Victoria Police are involved, seek their clearance on what can be shared before contacting parents or carers. Contact parents or carers as soon as possible, preferably on the same day. Harmful sexual behaviour – where Victoria Police are not involved and you need help engaging with parents and carers you can contact your local sexual assault service for support and advice.		
Have you sought advice from Victoria Police or your local sexual assault service?		☐ Yes ☐ No
Is it appropriate to contact the parent/carer/s?		☐ Yes ☐ No
List reasons if it is not appropriate to contact the parent/carer/s.		
	Student 1 – Student who experienced abuse	Student 2 – Student using violence or engaging in behaviour that causes harm
Name of staff member making the call		
Name of parent/carer receiving the call		
What information was shared?		
What information was not shared? Per advice from Victoria Police		
Discussion outcomes		

4 Critical Actions: **support** students through your school

See [support students through your school](#).

Your actions in **support** complement your actions in **refer**. They can happen at the same time if you decide that's the best way to help the student/s.

Planned Actions		
	Student 1 – Student who experienced abuse	Student 2 – Student using violence or engaging in behaviour that causes harm
Who have you engaged to plan support?	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Allied health professionals ☐ Specialist support agency (specify) _____ ☐ Other (specify) _____	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Allied health professionals ☐ Specialist support agency (specify) _____ ☐ Other (specify) _____
Does the student have any diverse needs? See supporting students with diverse needs This includes: • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students • students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds • international students • students with disability • LGBTIQ+ students • students in out-of-home care.	☐ No ☐ Yes – specify supports in place	☐ No ☐ Yes – specify supports in place
What supports have the student and/or parents or carers requested?		
Follow up actions Include detail on the follow-up actions taken to support the students		
Current supports in place		
Include how you used information sharing and for what purpose If applicable		

4 Critical Actions: **refer** students to community services

See [refer students to community services](#). Use this section to document the actions you have taken to refer a student to community services.

Planned Actions		
	Student 1 – Student who experienced abuse	Student 2 – Student using violence or engaging in behaviour that causes harm
Who have you engaged to plan referrals?	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Other (specify)_____	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Other (specify)_____
If you haven't engaged with the students and/or parents or carers provide reasoning		
Which referrals have you suggested and/or the student and/or parents or carers requested?		
Which services has the student been referred to? Include detail on referrals to wellbeing professionals or other specialised services		
How did you support the student and parents or carers to engage with these services? Include if the school connected the student with the service or if they self-referred		
What information has been shared with other agencies or professionals? Include how you used information sharing and for what purpose, if applicable		

Review – student outcomes

Complete this section with your school leadership team 4-6 weeks after the incident, disclosure or concern. This will support you and your school to continue to protect students in your care and to reflect on your processes and the need for any follow-up actions.

Current student safety and wellbeing		
	Student 1 – Student who experienced abuse	Student 2 – Student using violence or engaging in behaviour that causes harm
Does the student have any wellbeing issues that are not being addressed?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
How will these issues be addressed?		
Are there other impacted students?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
If yes, how will their issues be addressed?		
Current wellbeing of impacted staff members		
Does the staff member/s who made the report/witnessed the incident, received a disclosure or had a concern require any support?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
If yes, what support has been received?		
Review – significant child safety incident After any significant child safety incident, your school must review its child safety policies, processes and practices and make improvements where needed. For more details, see reviewing child safety practices.		

Review – 4 Critical Actions

Complete this section with your school leadership team 4-6 weeks after the incident, disclosure or concern. This section will help you determine if the school has followed the PROTECT 4 Critical Actions appropriately.

Implementation of the 4 Critical Actions

Please see below some questions to consider for the post-incident review

Identify

- Was an appropriate decision made in relation to when to act?
- Could the concern of abuse have been detected earlier?
- Did the school take appropriate action in an emergency?

Report

- Was a report made to the appropriate authorities and relevant governing body?
- Did the school contact the parents/carers of all impacted students as soon as possible?
- Have the parents continued to be engaged (if appropriate)?

Support

- Were the student/s and parents/carers engaged to determine the right support?
- Has a student support group been established?
- Has the school provided appropriate support for the student/s?

Refer

- Did school staff refer the student/s to appropriate external services?
- Were the student/s and parents/carers appropriately engaged in the referral process?

Other

- If the student/s has diverse needs was this considered?
- Was the student/s appropriately supported in interviews?
- Have any complaints about how this was handled been received?
- Have these complaints been resolved?
- Were staff, students and parents kept informed of how their information will be managed throughout the management of the incident, including the referral process?

Learnings

Detail any observations/learning that could help strengthen processes to continue to protect students

Follow up actions

Detail any follow up actions from this review

Identify and respond to child abuse in the family

A template for Victorian Catholic schools

Instructions for school staff to complete this template

When	Use this template: - to document any incident, disclosure or concern that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. - with the <u>4 Critical Actions to Identify and Respond to Child Abuse: Family</u>. This includes the <u>family violence identification and screening tool</u>. - to record actions you have taken. It does not replace the need to follow the 4 Critical Actions immediately. Do not delay taking action to complete this template.
Why	You must document your actions. If you use this template, it will become the official record of the incident. If you do not use a template provided, you must still ensure you collect, record and securely retain all the information required in the template. Recorded information may inform reports and/or referrals, be requested in court proceedings, and support your decisions if evidence is required.
How	Record details factually. Avoid opinions or conclusions and provide as much information as possible. Schools must record all: - observations - disclosures - other details that led them to have a concern about child abuse - the school's response.
Record Management	Records must be kept in a secure, logical place to ensure future access. All Catholic schools should follow their policy and procedure to document and report all child safety incidents to school leadership and their relevant governing body. For further guidance see <u>4 Critical Actions: Document your actions</u>.
Need help?	If you need additional support to complete this template, you can consult: - a member of your student wellbeing or leadership team <u>support and advisory services for school staff</u>.
More information	Visit www.vic.gov.au/PROTECT to access guidance to identify and respond to child abuse in the family.

Staff member leading the response

Staff Member	
Name and role	
School name	
School address/campus	
Relationship to student	

Staff member completing this template, if different to above

Staff Member	
Name and role	
School name	
School address/campus	
Relationship to student	

Student details

For additional student and parent/carer information consult your student management system or the completed family violence identification and/or screening tool.

Student	
Full name	
Year level	
Date of birth	

Responding to an emergency

See [Responding to an emergency](#).

Use this section to document how you responded to an emergency, if applicable.

Details	
Have you responded to an emergency?	☐ Not applicable – continue to identify child abuse ☐ Yes
Provide a brief description of the emergency	
Did the student require first aid? If yes, please describe	
Who administered first aid?	
Did the student require further immediate medical assistance?	
Current location and safety status E.g. are all impacted students safe and not in any immediate danger	

4 Critical Actions: **identify** child abuse

See [identify child abuse in the family](#).

You can identify abuse in the family in many ways. You can:

- witness an incident
- [receive a disclosure \(including information from a third party\)](#)
- observe [physical or behavioural signs](#)
- observe [signs of family violence trauma in children and young people](#)
- observe [family violence risk factors](#)
- observe [narratives and behaviours that may indicate an adult is using family violence](#)
- see something worrying or problematic online and/or on a student's device.

What has led you to have a concern or form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being abused by someone in the family

Has a member of staff completed the family violence identification tool ?	☐ No – complete the family violence identification tool (any staff) ☐ Yes
Was the completed identification tool given to the MARAM nominated staff?	☐ No – give the tool to the MARAM nominated staff member ☐ Yes
Has the MARAM nominated staff member completed the family violence screening tool ?	☐ No – complete the family violence screening tool (MARAM nominated staff) ☐ Yes
Has the MARAM nominated staff member completed the basic safety plan where there is current family violence?	☐ No – complete the basic safety plan (MARAM nominated staff) ☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable – there is no current family violence

4 Critical Actions: determine your pathway

See [determine your pathway](#).

Family violence	
Did you form a belief there is family violence, but it was not a mandatory report or a crime against a child?	☐ <u>Yes</u> – go to refer ☐ <u>No</u>
Family struggling with care, wellbeing or development of a child	
Did you believe there is significant wellbeing concern because the family is struggling with the care, wellbeing or development of a child?	☐ <u>Yes</u> – <u>go</u> to refer ☐ <u>No</u>
Report to Child Protection, including mandatory report	
Was there a reasonable belief that: • a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse and • the child's parents have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from that harm?	☐ <u>Yes</u> – go to report ☐ <u>No</u>
Crime	
Did you form a reasonable belief that a crime against a child has been committed but it is not a mandatory report?	☐ <u>Yes</u> – go to report ☐ <u>No</u>

4 Critical Actions: **support** students through your school

See [support students through your school](#).

Your actions in **support** complement your actions in **refer**. They can happen at the same time if you decide that's the best way to help the student.

Planned Actions	
Who have you engaged to plan support?	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Allied health professionals ☐ Specialist support agency (specify) _____ ☐ Other (specify) _____
Does the student have any diverse needs? See supporting students with diverse needs This includes: • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students • students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds • international students • students with disability • LGBTIQ+ students • students in out-of-home care.	☐ No ☐ Yes – specify supports in place
What supports have the student and/or parents or carers have requested?	
Follow up actions Include detail on the follow-up actions taken to support the student	
Current supports in place	
Include how you used information sharing and for what purpose If applicable	

4 Critical Actions: **refer** students to community services

See [refer students to community services](#). Use this section to document the actions you have taken to refer a student to community services.

Planned Actions	
Who have you engaged to plan referrals?	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Other (specify) _____
If you haven't engaged with the students and/or parents or carers provide reasoning	
Which referrals have you suggested and/or the student and/or parents or carers requested?	
Does the student identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, did the student and/or their family choose to be supported by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable
Which services has the student been referred to? Include detail on referrals to wellbeing professionals or other specialised services, including The Orange Door	
How did you support the student and parents or carers to engage with these services? Include if the school connected the student with the service or if they self-referred	
What information has been shared with other agencies or professionals? Include how you used information sharing and for what purpose, if applicable	

4 Critical Actions: **report** child abuse

See [report abuse to authorities](#). Use this section to document the child abuse you have reported.

Reporting to authorities	
Who have you reported the allegations to?	☐ DFFH Child Protection ☐ Victoria Police ☐ Other (Specify) _____ ☐ Decision not to report (provide reasons below)
Details of the report to authorities	
Date	
Time	
Report to	
Outcome of the report	
Details of the report to authorities	
Date	
Time	
Report to	
Outcome of the report	
If you have decided <u>not</u> to report	
Detail why	
Any follow-up actions	

Reporting to school leadership	
Who have you reported the allegations to? Name/position	
Date	
Time	
Discussion outcomes	
Your school's relevant governing body	
Contact your principal advisory service or governing body. They will advise you of the next actions consistent with your school's reporting policy. A list of school governing bodies can be found here .	
Date	
Time	
Discussion outcomes	
Engage the student and their parents or carers	
If Victoria Police or Child Protection are involved, seek their clearance on what can be shared before contacting parents or carers. Contact parents or carers as soon as possible, preferably on the same day.	
Have you sought advice from Victoria Police or Child Protection?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Is it appropriate to contact parent/carer?	☐ Yes ☐ No
List reasons if it is not appropriate to contact parent/carer	
Name of staff member making the call	
Name of parent/carer receiving the call	
What information was shared?	
What information was not shared? Per advice from Victoria Police or Child Protection	
Discussion outcomes	

Review – Student outcomes

Complete this section with your school leadership team 4-6 weeks after the incident, disclosure or concern. This will support you and your school to continue to protect students in your care and to reflect on your processes and the need for any follow-up actions.

Current student safety and wellbeing	
Have you adapted to changing circumstances?	☐ Yes, consider if you need to repeat one or more of the 4 Critical Actions, see adapt to changing circumstances ☐ No, continue to provide ongoing support
Does the student have any wellbeing issues that are not being addressed?	☐ Yes ☐ No
How will these issues be addressed?	
Are there other impacted students?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
If yes, how will their issues be addressed?	
Current wellbeing of impacted staff members	
Does the staff member who made had a concern, witnessed the incident, received a disclosure or made the referral/report, require any support?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what support has been received?	

Review – 4 Critical Actions

Complete this section with your school leadership team 4-6 weeks after the incident, disclosure or concern. This section will help you determine if the school has followed the PROTECT 4 Critical Actions appropriately.

Implementation of the 4 Critical Actions

Please see below some questions to consider for the post-incident review

Identify

- Was an appropriate decision made in relation to when to act?
- Could the concern of abuse have been detected earlier?
- Did the school take appropriate action in an emergency?

Support

- Were the student and parents/carers engaged to determine the right support?
- Has a student support group been established?
- Has the school provided appropriate support for the student?

Refer

- Did school staff refer the student to appropriate external services?
- Were the student and parents/carers appropriately engaged in the referral process?

Report

- Was a report made to the appropriate authorities and relevant governing body?
- Did the school contact the parents/carers as soon as possible?
- Have the parents continued to be engaged (if appropriate)?

Other

- If the student has diverse needs, was this considered?
- Was the student appropriately supported in interviews?
- Have any complaints about how this was handled been received?
- Have these complaints been resolved?
- Were staff, students and parents kept informed of how their information will be managed throughout the management of the incident, including the referral process?

Learnings

Detail observations or learning that could help strengthen processes to continue to protect students

Follow up actions

Detail any follow up actions from this review

Identify and respond to child abuse in the community

A template for Victorian Catholic schools

Instructions for school staff to complete this template

When	Use this template: • to document any incident, disclosure or concern that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. • with the <u>4 Critical Actions to Identify and Respond to Child Abuse: Community</u> to record actions you have taken. It does not replace the need to follow the • Critical Actions immediately. Do not delay taking action to complete this template.
Why	You must document your actions. If you use this template, it will become the official record of the incident. If you do not use a template provided, you must still ensure you collect, record and securely retain all the information required in the template. Recorded information may inform reports, be requested in court proceedings, and support your decisions if evidence is required.
How	Record details factually. Avoid opinions or conclusions and provide as much information as possible. Schools must record all: • observations • disclosures • other details that led them to have a concern about child abuse • the school's response.
Record Management	Records must be kept in a secure, logical place to ensure future access. All Catholic schools should follow their policy and procedure to document and report all child safety incidents to school leadership and their relevant governing body. For further guidance see <u>4 Critical Actions: Document your actions</u>.
Need help?	If you need additional support to complete this template, you can consult: • a member of your student wellbeing or leadership team • <u>support and advisory services for school staff</u>.
More information	Visit <u>www.vic.gov.au/PROTECT</u> to access guidance to identify and respond to child abuse in the community.

Staff member leading the response

Staff Member	
Name and role	
School name	
School address/campus	
Relationship to student	

Staff member completing this template, if different to above

Staff Member	
Name and role	
School name	
School address/campus	
Relationship to student	

Student details

For additional student and parent/carer information consult your student management system.

Student	
Full name	
Year level	
Date of birth	

Responding to an emergency

See [responding to an emergency](#).

Use this section to document how you responded to an emergency, if applicable.

Details	
Have you responded to an emergency?	☐ Not applicable – continue to identify child abuse ☐ Yes
Provide a brief description of the emergency	
Did the student require first aid? If yes, please describe	
Who administered first aid?	
Did the student require further immediate medical assistance?	
Is the child currently in a safe location? E.g. are all impacted students safe and not in any immediate danger	

4 Critical Actions: **identify** child abuse

See [identify child abuse](#).

You can identify abuse in the community in many ways. You can:

- witness an incident
- [receive a disclosure](#) (including information from a third party)
- [observe physical or behavioural signs](#)
- see something worrying or problematic online and/or on a student's device.

What has led you to have a concern or belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being abused by someone in the community

Include detail of the incident, disclosure or concern • Include names, times and dates • Document the student/s exact words as far as possible	
Physical indicators See types of abuse and what to look for	
Behavioural Indicators See types of abuse and what to look for	
Were there any patterns of behaviour/prior concerns before the incident, disclosure or concern?	

Details of the persons alleged to have committed the abuse (if known)

Name	
Relationship to student	
Contact details	

4 Critical Actions: **report** child abuse

See [report abuse to authorities](#). Use this section to document the child abuse you have reported.

Reporting to authorities

Who have you reported the allegations to?	☐ Victoria Police ☐ DFFH Child Protection ☐ Other (Specify) _____ ☐ Decision not to report (provide reasons below)
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Details of the report to authorities

Date	
Time	
Report to	
Outcome of the report	

Details of the report to authorities

Date	
Time	
Report to	
Outcome of the report	

If you have decided not to report

Detail why	
Any follow-up actions	

Reporting to school leadership	
Who have you reported the allegations to? Name/position	
Date	
Time	
Discussion outcomes	
Your school's relevant governing body Contact your principal advisory service or governing body. They will advise you of the next actions consistent with your school's reporting policy. A list of school governing bodies can be found here .	
Date	
Time	
Discussion outcomes	
Engage the student and their parents or carers If Victoria Police or Child Protection are involved, seek their clearance on what can be shared before contacting parents or carers. Contact parents or carers as soon as possible, preferably on the same day.	
Have you sought advice from Victoria Police or Child Protection?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Is it appropriate to contact parent/carer?	☐ Yes ☐ No
List reasons if it is not appropriate to contact parent/carer	
Name of staff member making the call	
Name of parent/carer receiving the call	
What information was shared?	
What information was not shared? Per advice from Victoria Police or Child Protection	
Discussion outcomes	

4 Critical Actions: **support** students through your school

See [support students through your school](#).

Your actions in support complement your actions in refer. They can happen at the same time if you decide that's the best way to help the student.

Planned Actions	
Who have you engaged to plan support?	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Allied health professionals ☐ Specialist support agency (specify) _____ ☐ Other (specify) _____
Does the student have any diverse needs? See supporting students with diverse needs This includes: • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students • students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds • international students • students with disability • LGBTIQ+ students • students in out-of-home care.	☐ No ☐ Yes – specify supports in place
What supports have the student and/or parents or carers requested?	
Follow up actions Include detail on the follow-up actions taken to support the student	
Current supports in place	
Include how you used information sharing and for what purpose If applicable	

4 Critical Actions: **refer** students to community services

See [refer students to community services](#). Use this section to document the actions you have taken to refer a student to community services.

Planned Actions	
Who have you engaged to plan referrals?	☐ Student ☐ Parents or carers ☐ School leadership ☐ School health and wellbeing team ☐ Other (specify) _____
If you haven't engaged with the students and/or parents or carers provide reasoning	
Which referrals have you suggested and/or the student and/or parents or carers requested?	
Does the student identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, did the student and/or their family choose to be supported by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable
Which services has the student been referred to? Include detail on referrals to wellbeing professionals or other specialised services	
How did you support the student and parents or carers to engage with these services? Include if the school connected the student with the service or if they self-referred	
What information has been shared with other agencies or professionals? Include how you used information sharing and for what purpose, if applicable	

Review – student outcomes

Complete this section with your school leadership team 4-6 weeks after the incident, disclosure or concern. This will support you and your school to continue to protect students in your care and to reflect on your processes and the need for any follow-up actions.

Current student safety and wellbeing	
Does the student have any wellbeing issues that are not being addressed?	☐ Yes ☐ No
How will these issues be addressed?	
Are there other impacted students?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
If yes, how will their issues be addressed?	
Current wellbeing of impacted staff members	
Does the staff member/s who made the report/witnessed the incident, received a disclosure or had a concern require any support?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what support has been received?	

Review – 4 Critical Actions

Complete this section with your school leadership team 4-6 weeks after the incident, disclosure or concern. This section will help you determine if the school has followed the PROTECT 4 Critical Actions appropriately.

Implementation of the 4 Critical Actions

Please see below some questions to consider for the post-incident review

Identify

- Was an appropriate decision made in relation to when to act?
- Could the concern of abuse have been detected earlier?
- Did the school take appropriate action in an emergency?

Report

- Was a report made to the appropriate authorities and to the department?
- Did the school contact the parents/carers as soon as possible?
- Have the parents continued to be engaged (if appropriate)?

Support

- Were the student and parents/carers engaged to determine the right support?
- Has a student support group been established?
- Has the school provided appropriate support for the student?

Refer

- Did school staff refer the student to appropriate external services?
- Were the student and parents/carers appropriately engaged in the referral process?

Other

- If the student has diverse needs was this considered?
- Was the student appropriately supported in interviews?
- Have any complaints about how this was handled been received?
- Have these complaints been resolved?
- Were staff, students and parents kept informed of how their information will be managed throughout the management of the incident, including the referral process?

Learnings

Detail observations or learnings that could help strengthen processes to continue to protect students

Follow up actions

Detail any follow up actions from this review



Sacré Cœur

PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting Obligations Procedure

Document Control

Document Details

Document Name	PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting Obligations Procedure
Document created by	Director of Risk and Compliance / Child Safety Officer
Document Approval	School Board, School Principal, School Leadership and the Child Safeguarding Committee

Document Management

Relevant to:	All Teaching Staff, General Staff, School Board members, Volunteers, Visitors, Clergy, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers
Related documents include, but not limited to:	• Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (2025) • Reportable Conduct Policy (2025) • Engaging Families in Child Safety Policy (2025) • Child Safety Code of Conduct (2025) • Diversity Policy (2022) • Complaints Policy (2023) • Grievance Policy (2019) • Whistleblower Policy (2019) • Staff Code of Conduct (2021) • Parent Code of Conduct (2023) • Student Code of Conduct (2023) • Psychologist Policy (2023) • Against Bullying Policy (2020)
Related Legislation, but not limited to:	• Ministerial Order 1359 (2022) • The Child and Young Persons Act (2005) • Privacy Act Cth (1988) / Australian Privacy Principles (2014) • Crimes Act 1958 • Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) • Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) • Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) • Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic.) • Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) • Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004) • Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act (1986)
Review:	The Policy shall be reviewed on an annual basis by the School Board, School Principal, School Leadership and the School's Child Safeguarding Committee. The next review of this Policy is due November 2026.

Change History

Author	Date	Change Description	Version
N Visic	June 2026	New policy created and endorsed by Leadership and School Board and communicated to all staff, updated to ELMO Learning and published on website.	V1

Sacré Cœur promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children