

# Responding to Concerns of Child Abuse, Neglect, or Safety

## What we need to know

- Abuse is wrong – morally, socially and legally – and is never the child's fault
- The prevention of child abuse is everyone's responsibility
- Offenders can be anyone
- It is rare for children to lie about child abuse – the average age of disclosure is 24 years old
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 7 boys will be sexually abused in their lifetime (Royal Commission, 2014)

## At the time of disclosure:

- If possible, have another person with you
- Listen, listen, listen
- Declare that if you feel the student is in danger, this information will need to be passed on

## Step 1: Responding to concerns

If you have any concern or suspicion (on *reasonable grounds*) that a child may be experiencing any form of abuse, neglect, sexual offending, psychological or emotional harm, exposure to family violence or grooming, it is mandatory to **immediately** raise your concerns with one of our **Child Safety Officers** (see Appendix A for a list of those Officers).

### *Reasonable grounds*

- Have I formed the belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm?
- Am I in doubt about the child's safety and the parents'/carers' ability to protect the child?

**Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 000**

## Step 2: Determine if a report is required

Gather and record the information, and discuss your concerns with a Child Safety Officer. Where your belief remains that a child is at risk, you have a legal duty to ensure a report is made.

Our Child Safety Officers will:

- Listen to your concerns
- Protect the privacy of the person reporting the information
- Assist with recording your observations using the 'Responding to Suspected Child Abuse' form
- Assist you to determine if a report is to be made, or seek further advice (e.g. from Orange Door or a member of the College Executive)
- They may work with you to consult the Principal

## Step 3: Make a report (where you have determined that a report is appropriate)

- Ensure a report is made. You may make this report, or you may assist the Child Safety Officer or the Principal to make the report. If you are not present when the report is made, to discharge your legal responsibilities you need to be assured that the report was made.

## Step 4: Paperwork

- Submit paperwork to the Principal, if not previously submitted

## External Authority Contact Details

- **Victoria Police** 000 (24 hours)
- **Child Protection Services, Department of Families Fairness and Housing**
  - *Eastern Division Intake* 1300 360 391 (8.45am – 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)
  - *After hours emergency services* 13 12 78 (24 hours)
- **Orange Door** 1800 319 353

# Child Safety Officers' Role

The identification of Child Safety Officers provides students, staff and parents with a clearly identifiable support network in the event of a suspected child safety issue.

However, this does not remove the statutory obligation of all adults to report child abuse as per Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) and Mandatory Reporting regulations, nor does it take away the opportunities of any child to speak to any member of staff should they have concerns.

Child Safety Officers (listed in Appendix A) will:

## Provide Authoritative Advice

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
- Liaise with the Principal and College leaders to maintain visibility of child safety.
- Lead the development of the College's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and provide coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.
- Have an understanding of how the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and community service organisations (such as Child First providers) conduct a child protection case conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively if required to do so.
- Be familiar with reporting requirements under various legal obligations – a summary is provided as Appendix B.
- Be familiar with the 'FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse' – a resource produced by the Department.

## Raise Awareness

- Ensure the College Child Safe policies are known by staff and the College community and used appropriately.
- Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking into account their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.
- Ensure each member of staff is aware and understands the College's Child Safety policy, reporting procedures, and the College's Code of Conduct.

## Child Safety incident management and reporting

- Promptly respond to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse and ensure the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously.
- Responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse and bring it to the attention of College Executive members in order to follow the College and statutory procedures including:
  - informing appropriate authorities
  - making, securing and retaining records of the allegation of child abuse and the College's response to it.

# Child Safety Officers at Kingswood College

Please discuss your concerns with any of the following Child Safety Officers:

**Principal** ..... Elisabeth Lenders

**Deputy Principal**..... Geoff Roberts-Thomson

## Heads of Sections

- **ELC** ..... Wendy Corser
- **Junior**..... Amy Lovell
- **Middle** ..... Adam Some
- **Senior** ..... Stephen Maus

**College Counsellor** ..... Belinda Goldsworthy

**Heads of House**..... Jenny Ahn, Alex Davies, Grace Hicks, Heidi Ford

**Year Level Coordinators** ..... Jana Walter, Victoria Blakston, Michelle O’Keefe, Alex Sylvan, Lee Dalton, James Bahn

**LINKS Coordinator**..... Julia Thiele

**Indigenous Program** ..... Michaela Sutherland

**International Students** ..... Amethyst Qu, Lynelle Dudman

This appendix is updated regularly (last updated March 2022), and is [Appendix A](#) to “Responding to Concerns of Child Abuse, Neglect and Safety and the Child Safety Officers Role (v2.3)”

The Principal is responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

This document as a whole was approved by the College Executive in November 2021.

The College Council was provided with a copy of document in November 2021, as a means of ensuring that an organisational culture of child safety is embedded at the College.

The document is published internally on Kingsnet for access by staff, students and parents, and is publicly accessible on our website.

## Overview of Child Safety and Reporting Obligations

Known as	Source of Obligation	Documented in our policies	Relates to	Report to	College Process	Applies when
Reportable Conduct	Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)	Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers and Others (v2.1c)	Allegations against an employee (and any person providing a service to the College, including a volunteer)	Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)	Please report the concern to the Principal. Any person may disclose a reportable allegation to the CCYP, but the Principal is required by law to notify the CCYP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence and been commenced or concluded;</li> <li>• sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;</li> <li>• physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;</li> <li>• any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; or</li> <li>• significant neglect of a child</li> </ul> <p>“Sexual misconduct” includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• behaviour, physical contact or speech or other communication of a sexual nature, for example 'sexting';</li> <li>• inappropriate touching or physical contact;</li> <li>• grooming behaviour; and</li> <li>• voyeurism.</li> </ul>
Mandatory Reporting	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (CYFA) (section 184)	Mandatory Reporting Policy (v2.3) – applies to teachers, counsellors and ministers of religion.	A situation where a child (aged under 17) is in need of protection from significant harm (from physical injury or sexual abuse)	Child Protection or Child First	Please report the concern to the Principal, or to a Child Safety Officer. You must be satisfied that a report has been made before your obligation to report is discharged.	A Mandatory Report must be made when you form a belief that a child is in need of protection where the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical injury; or</li> <li>• sexual abuse;</li> </ul> and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.
Failure to Report and Failure to Protect	Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)	The Obligation to Report a Sexual Offence and Failure To Protect (v2.1c)	<p><b>Failure to Report:</b> A belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under the age of 16 years, by a person aged 18 years or over.</p> <p><b>Failure to Protect:</b> A child under the age of 16 is at risk of a sexual offence.</p>	Police, unless a report has been made to Child Protection and there is no further information to provide	Notify and Child Safety Officer and the Principal.	<p><b>Failure to Report:</b> Anyone aged 18+ years, if they believe that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under the age of 16 years, by a person aged 18 years or over.</p> <p><b>Failure to Protect:</b> A person in a position of authority has a duty to act immediately to reduce or remove a risk, where a child under the age of 16 is at risk of a sexual offence.</p>

Known as	Source of Obligation	Documented in our policies	Relates to	Report to	College Process	Applies when
MO870 – Child Safe Standards	Ministerial Order No 870 – Child Safe Standards	Implemented particularly through our Child Safe Policy and our Code of Conduct	All staff, students, and volunteers. The obligations include regular professional learning for staff, developing a College culture which supports and listens to students, and providing ongoing age-appropriate training for students.	(See other policies for reporting obligations)	In accordance with the various policies, report any concerns to the Principal, and at times to other authorities.	We must have an inclusive culture, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety</li> <li>• a child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child</li> <li>• a child safety code of conduct</li> <li>• screening, supervision, training, and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse</li> <li>• procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse</li> <li>• strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse</li> <li>• strategies to promote child participation and empowerment.</li> </ul>
Duty of Care			Our role, which requires us to protect children under our care from harm that is reasonably foreseeable.	DFFH Child Protection or Child First. Follow the Four Critical Actions.	Notify the Principal. Follow the Four Critical Actions.	All school staff have a duty of care to protect children under our care from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. We have a duty of care towards all students involved in student sexual behaviour, including students exhibiting concerning/harmful behaviours, students impacted by such behaviours, and any other students in the school who may have witnessed and/or been affected by the sexual behaviour.
PROTECT	Victorian Department of Education training resources		Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse, and student sexual offending			<b>FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse</b> provides an overarching framework to assist schools to ensure they act in accordance with the range of obligations which exist.  There is also a separate reference: <b>FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS: Responding to Student Sexual Offending</b>