



COLLEGE POLICY

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

VERSION
5.0

Document and Version Management

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Child Protection Policy

Kingsway Christian College Child Protection Policy is largely a protective behaviours document, in our aim to be aware, be preventative and, in a worse case scenario, have protocols in which to deal with potential complaints and/or abuse scenarios.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors and volunteers, Board and Board Committee members, parents/carers, students and visitors including contractors and consultants. All College community members are to abide by the Child Protection Policy and Child Safety Framework.

Policy Statement

Kingsway Christian College will apply all child safe practices which accord with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and is committed to being a child safe organisation through the prevention, identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect. This includes the provision of support to children who have been abused or are affected by abuse or neglect.

It is our policy that Kingsway Christian College staff will:

- Take all actions and make decisions based on the best interests of the child;
- Apply child safe principles
- Report all concerns relating to possible child abuse and neglect; and
- Comply with the procedures relevant to their position:

The child safe principles that apply to this policy are:

- Actions that reduce the likelihood of harm occurring to children and young people;
- Actions that increase the likelihood of any harm being discovered; and
- Appropriate responses by staff to any disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.

The Kingsway Christian College Child Protection Policy will be reviewed regularly as part of College planning and review, or as a result of legal changes.

Human Resource Management

Kingsway Christian College has a range of human resource management practices to ensure staff including governing body members, relief staff, contractors and volunteers, are adequately screened, trained and supervised.

- All staff and volunteers must have a valid Working With Children Check, unless exempt.
 - Volunteers who are parents are exempt from getting a WWC Check, unless on an overnight camp.
 - Parent volunteers who undertake a professional role (either paid or unpaid) at the school are also to be in possession of a current WWC Card (WWCC).
 - Grandparents who volunteer are not exempt and must have a valid WWCC. See the Working with Children website for more information on exemptions.
- Teaching staff must be registered with the Teacher Registration Board WA; this process includes a Police clearance.

- New employees in non teaching roles must provide a WWCC and National Police Clearance.
- New employees are reference checked before being offered a position.
- Trainee teachers are supervised appropriately.
- Contractors have appropriate checks and/or are supervised when working near students.
- Relevant and timely Professional Learning for staff: Annual training on
 - Recognition of Grooming, Child Abuse and appropriate prevention practices and strategies;
 - Mandatory and Non-mandatory Reporting obligations of sexual abuse and other forms of child abuse;
 - National Principles for Child Safety
 - Staff Code of Conduct and how to comply; and
 - other relevant policies and procedures as determined by the Principal and/or Senior Leadership Team

Definitions and Typical Indicators

Kingsway Christian College explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment. See below for definitions of these terms.

Child abuse

- 1) Physical abuse occurs when a child is severely and/or persistently hurt or injured by an adult or a child's caregiver.
- 2) Sexual abuse, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where:
 - a. The child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence;
 - b. The child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
 - c. There is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.
- 3) Emotional abuse includes:
 - a. Psychological abuse; and
 - b. Being exposed to an act of family and domestic violence.
- 4) Neglect includes failure by a child's parents to provide, arrange or allow the provision of:
 - a. Adequate care for the child; or
 - b. Effective medical, therapeutic or remedial treatment for the child.

Corporal Punishment

Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light; typically involving hitting the child with the hand or with an implement; can also include, for example, forcing the child to stay in any uncomfortable position. It does not include the use of reasonable physical restraint to protect the child or others from harm.

Degrading Punishment

Any punishment which is incompatible with respect for human dignity, including corporal punishment and non-physical punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child.

Definitions of Maltreatment

The result of action or inaction on the part of the person who has responsibility to care for a child that results in harm or injury to the child. The harm may include delayed physical and/or intellectual development. The maltreatment may include one or all of:

- a. **Emotional Abuse:** an attitude or behaviour by a person towards a child that causes emotional harm. It can include rejection or refusal to accept a child, terrorism, bullying, isolation, continual belittlement and exposure to chronic or serious domestic violence. Emotional abuse may be evidenced through disturbed behaviour or the impairment of the child's emotional, intellectual or social development.
- b. **Physical Abuse:** physical harm caused to a child. It includes injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and fractures caused by a range of acts including beating, shaking, illicit administration of alcohol and other drugs, attempted suffocation or excessive discipline.
- c. **Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse is defined by the Act in section 124A as:
'Sexual abuse' in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where:
 - (a) The child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; or
 - (b) The child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
 - (c) There is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.This legislation is not intended to capture all sexual activity involving children and young people. Reference should be made to consent laws in Western Australia.
- d. **Neglect:** failure of a parent/caregiver to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. These include adequate supervision, healthy food, suitable clothing, medical care and emotional security.

NB. Adults also need to be aware that research indicates a substantial proportion of abuse is perpetrated on children and youth by other youth.

Definition of child

The definition of 'child' is defined in section 3 of the Act as a person who is under the age of 18 years. In the absence of positive evidence as to age, a child is a person who is apparently under 18 years of age. Young people aged 18 and over are considered to be adults and are not covered by this legislation. However, schools still owe a duty of care to any students at the school. In these instances, police should be informed of any assault or crime against the young person.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

Non-Government School Sector Reporting Obligations

Published: December 2023

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

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

Take action to make the child safe, including risk to the child or children in the care of the organisation



Call WA Police Force on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety



WA Police Force

You should notify the WA Police Force immediately if you believe criminal conduct or suspected criminal conduct is occurring, or has occurred, or if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety.



Department of Communities

If you are a mandatory reporter and you form a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child has been sexually abused, or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse, you must report to the Department of Communities. If you are not a mandatory reporter and are concerned that a child is suffering any form of abuse or neglect you should report your concerns to the Department of Communities on 1800 273 889.



Department of Education (Non-Government School Regulation)

Non-government schools must notify the Director General, Department of Education, of reportable incidents within 48 hours by using the Reportable Incident Notification Form.



Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA)

An employer at an educational institution, including a childcare or centre-based service, must give written notice to the TRBWA within seven (7) days, where the employer has reasonable grounds to suspect that a registered teacher may have engaged in serious misconduct or may have taught with serious incompetence in circumstances where the teacher is dismissed or suspended from teaching or has resigned or has ceased teaching at the educational institution.



Ombudsman Western Australia

The Reportable Conduct Scheme (**Scheme**) operates alongside, and does not replace, other reporting obligations. The Scheme applies to all Western Australian non-government schools from 1 January 2023. The Scheme includes allegations of, and convictions for, certain types of child abuse involving **employees** (including volunteers and contractors) of the organisation. Conduct which occurs both within and external to your organisation is covered by the Scheme.

There are five categories of reportable conduct:

Sexual offences against, with or in the presence of a child

Sexual misconduct against, with or in the presence of a child

Physical assault against, with or in the presence of a child

Significant neglect of a child

Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child

Notification to the Ombudsman

If you form a belief on reasonable grounds that reportable conduct has occurred, follow your organisation's reporting procedures by notifying your Head of Organisation. The Head of the Organisation has an obligation to notify the Ombudsman and cause an investigation to be undertaken. Heads of Organisations and employees can contact the Ombudsman's office if they require further information on how to proceed.

This information sheet summarises reporting obligations and is provided for general guidance purposes – it is not intended to provide advice on legal obligations to any person or organisation. Employees who are unsure about their reporting obligations should speak with their manager as a priority.

Acknowledgement: Ombudsman Western Australia wishes to thank the New South Wales Office of the Children's Guardian and the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People for use of their publications relating to their reportable conduct schemes and their continuing advice and assistance.

Ombudsman Western Australia

ombudsman.wa.gov.au

08 9220 7471

Mandatory Reporting of child Sexual Abuse

Since the 1st January 2009, the *Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008* comes into effect and covers mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse in Western Australia.

Mandatory Reporters

It is mandatory for school teachers and nurses to report directly to CPFS a belief formed on reasonable grounds that a child is being or has been subjected to sexual abuse. Penalties apply for not reporting. The College adheres to the Mandatory reporting legislation as set out in the *Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)*. Only child sexual abuse is covered by the mandatory reporting obligation. However, teachers and school nurses are expected to report other forms of abuse (physical, emotional and neglect) to the Principal.

Non-Mandatory Reporters

The School requires all other concerned persons (which includes Staff, Contractors, Volunteers and Parents) who are not legally required to do so, to report sexual abuse and any other abuse set out in this Policy directly to the Principal immediately. When hearing and responding to disclosures of Child Abuse it is very important for the adult receiving the disclosure to act appropriately to ensure the child is listened to and protected.

When does a mandatory reporter make a report?

Mandatory reporters must report a belief, based on reasonable grounds which is formed in the course of their work, paid or unpaid, that a child has been the subject of sexual abuse or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse. This means that teachers working outside of the school grounds are also required to report when working in either a paid or unpaid capacity. For example, tutoring, volunteer teacher at youth centre, working as a Sunday school teacher.

Failure to make a report can incur a maximum penalty of \$6,000.

A mandatory reporter can form the necessary belief, based on reasonable grounds, by noting the presence of indicators, disclosures, injuries, signs, symptoms and behaviours that heighten concerns about child sexual abuse.

Teachers may wish to consider the following questions to assist them in deciding if their belief is based on reasonable grounds:

- Can you describe the reasons why you believe a child has been, or is being sexually abused?
- What has the child said or done to suggest they are being sexually abused?
- Have you observed, or been told about the presence of any of the 'possible indicators' of sexual abuse?
- Did the child disclose sexual abuse? What did they say happened? Who did they disclose to and when?
- What other behaviours have you observed and/or interactions with the child are of concern to you? What is the frequency and severity of the behaviour? How long has it been occurring?

How does a mandatory reporter make a report?

A centralised Mandatory Reporting Service has been established to receive all reports of child sexual abuse in Western Australia. This service is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

There are two ways to make a report - verbal or written.

A verbal report is preferred in the first instance as it allows the Mandatory Reporting Service to ask clarifying questions and gather as much information as possible. However, it must be followed by a written report as soon as is practicable, usually within 24 hours. To make a verbal report, the Mandatory Reporting Service can be reached on 1800 273 889.

Failure to follow up a verbal report with a written report as soon as is practicable may result in a fine of \$3,000. A written report form can be downloaded from the Mandatory Reporting website [Make a report \(dcp.wa.gov.au\)](http://dcp.wa.gov.au) or completed [online](#).

If you do not have access to a computer, the form can also be mailed out to you. Once you have completed your written report, it can be returned using the following methods:

Email to: mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au

Post to: PO Box 8146

Perth BC WA 6849

Once you have lodged a report, you will receive an acknowledgement receipt. This receipt is proof that you have made a report so it is important that you keep it.

Once the report has been lodged, the Mandatory Reporting Service will assess the immediate risk to the child, and determine the need for further child protection assessment and investigation. A copy of the report is sent to the WA Police. The police will then decide whether they need to be involved on a case by case basis.

The mandatory reporter will receive a feedback letter advising them of the District Office it has been referred to, or whether no further action was recommended by the Mandatory Reporting Service.

If the Principal is informed, or becomes aware, that a mandatory report has been made, the Principal will notify the Department of Education of a critical incident.

Powers of Child Protection and Family Support

The following powers of CPFS (Child Protection and Family Support) under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* includes:

Apprehension of children in need of care and protection(without warrant)

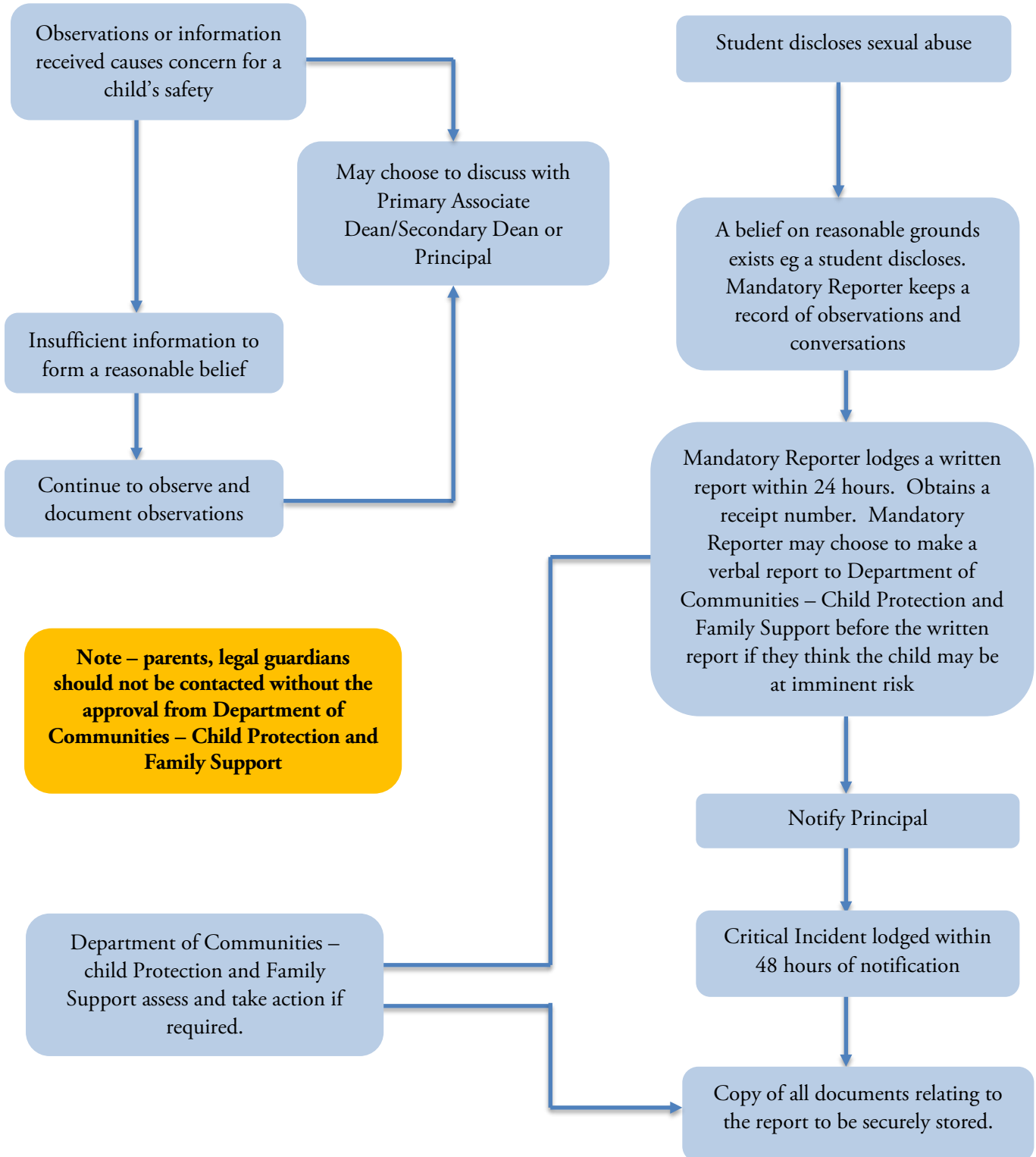
Interview the child: CPFS (Child Protection and Family Support) has the authority to interview the child at school before contact is made with the parent/caregiver. Before doing so, the Principal or the Principal's delegate at the College must be notified. The child should have the option of having support at the interview from a staff member of their choosing.

Removal of children from the school: CPFS (Child Protection and Family Support) officers may remove a child from the College if they have the permission of the parent/caregiver or if they have apprehended the child. The Principal should be satisfied that all conditions have been met before this occurs and document all conversations.

Medical examination: CPFS (Child Protection and Family Support) may require that a medical examination occur as soon as possible so that bruising, marking and other symptoms can be recorded for future reference. This would normally take place at either PMH or the Community Child

Health Services Centres. This examination can only take place if permission has been obtained from the parent/caregiver or the child has been apprehended (when parent/carer permission is not obtained).

Notification Steps for Child Sexual Abuse



Confidentiality and Legal Protection

The identity of the reporter is required to be kept confidential, except in limited circumstances. Section 124F(2) protects a reporter's identity from being disclosed. Disclosure of a reporter's identity carries a maximum fine of \$24,000 and 2 years imprisonment.

There are exceptions where a reporter's identity is permitted. Even where disclosure is allowed, consideration will be given to ensuring the reporter's safety has been taken into account. Examples of when a reporter's identity may be revealed include:

- The Mandatory Reporting Service must send a copy of every written report to the WA Police;
- The WA Police may need to reveal a reporter's identity in order to investigate or prosecute a suspected offence;
- A Department for Child Protection officer may need to reveal the reporter's identity when certain child protection, family law or adoption proceedings are taking place;
- Reporter may have provided written permission for their identity to be disclosed.

A mandated reporter who is normally governed by a code of confidentiality or secrecy, professional ethics, standards or principles of conduct (eg. Doctor/patient) is protected from a breach to this code if they are making a report in good faith. The legislative requirements of the Act override internal school policies, professional codes or confidentiality requirements.

A mandated reporter is also protected from liability. If a report is made in good faith, they will not incur any civil or criminal liability by making a report.

Where to go for information and assistance

The Department for Child Protection is the agency responsible for the new legislation regarding the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse. The Mandatory Reporting Service has been established by the Department to receive and investigate reports of sexual abuse.

The Department for Child Protection has established a [website](#). Information on this website includes frequently asked questions and a copy of the report to download.

The Mandatory Reporting Service can also be contacted through the following ways:

Telephone: 1800 708 704

Email: mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au

Fax: 1800 610 614

Post: PO Box 8146, Perth BC, WA 6849

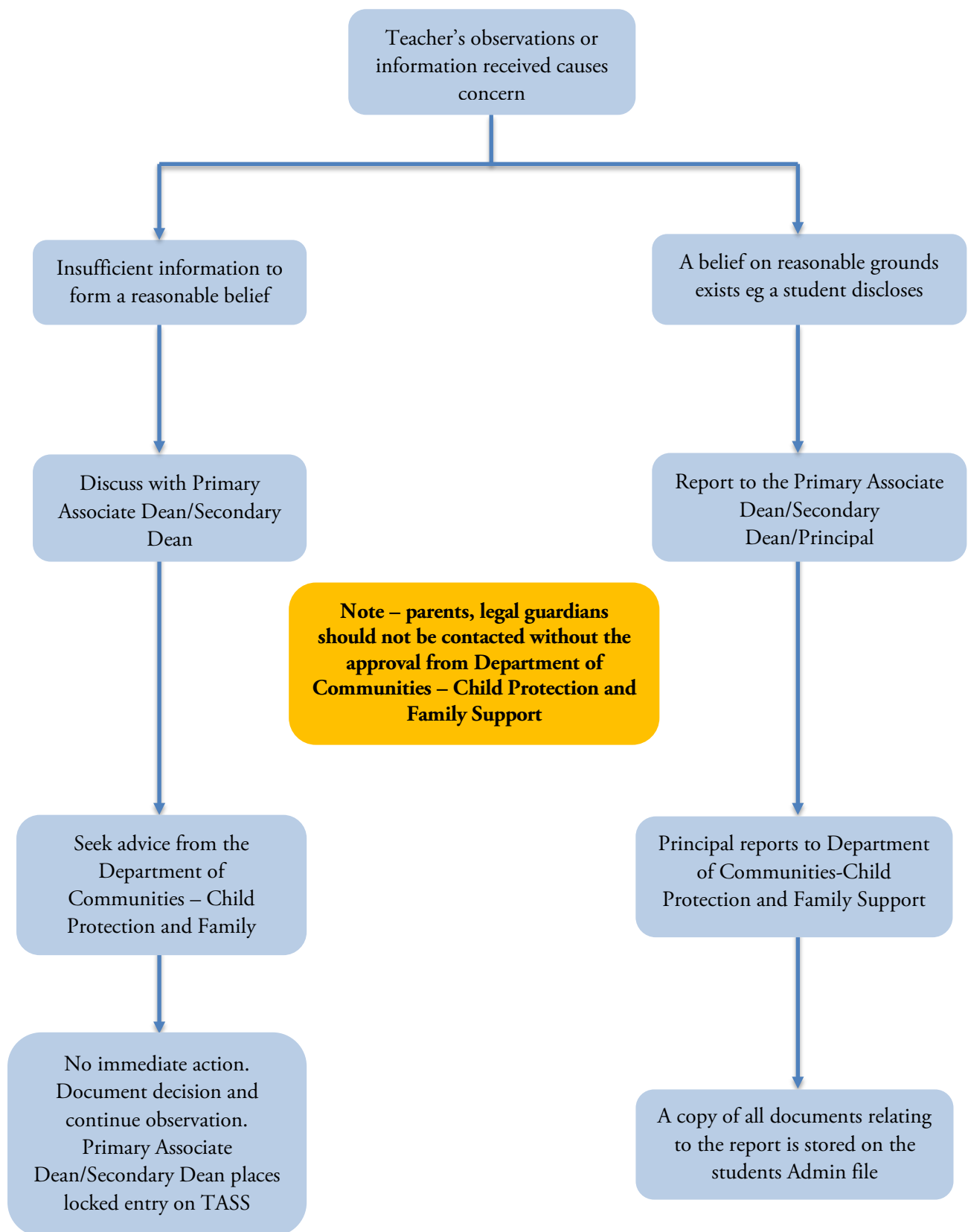
Storage and Retention of Notes and Reports

Because the reporting obligations under the Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008 are obligations placed upon the teacher personally, it is recommended that the teacher:

- (a) Keep a copy of the report and any notes the teacher provides to the Department of Child Protection in compliance with their obligations under the Act;
- (b) Keep a record of receipt by the Department of Child Protection of the report (this is usually in the form of receipt number) as evidence that the report was made to the Department of Child Protection;
- (c) Keep a copy of the report and any notes the teacher provides to the College;

- (d) Should retain copies of any notes, the report and the receipt of the report by the Department of Child Protection, when the teacher leaves the College.

Notification Steps for Child Abuse (excluding sexual abuse)



Response to Abuse or Neglect

There may be times where a student makes a disclosure about abuse or neglect. Staff should be aware of the immediate needs of the student and what to do in these circumstances.

- Use “protective interrupting” if students begin to disclose in class or in a public area.
- Acknowledge that you have heard them and stop them from disclosing any further
- Be supportive and gently indicate that they might tell you about it in a more private situation, and
- Quietly arrange to see them as soon as possible, in a situation away from other students
- Establish clear limits of confidentiality
- Listen attentively
- Listen to students in a private location within the school
- Be supportive and understanding
- Be empathetic to student’s feelings
- Acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such things
- Try to identify student’s fears
- Let the student tell the event in his or her own words
- Accept what is said – only the minimum of information is required
- Reassure the student that it is right to tell, that they are believed and that they are not to blame
- Be calm and non-judgemental
- Tell students that a report will be made to a person who will be able to provide protection
- Allow students the option of support during an agency interview and reassure them of the availability of continuing support
- Document the disclosure and subsequent discussion and actions
- Explain what will happen next
- Try and stay with the student until necessary steps have been taken to ensure safety and support (as directed)

Staff must be mindful that they do not:

- Push for details or to conduct an investigation. Other agencies have this responsibility
- Express judgement of the student, perpetrator or family
- Get angry, upset or show shock
- Blame students
- Put words in the student’s mouth or interrogate, as this could jeopardise the interviewing process of CPFS (Child Protection and Family Support) and police
- Promise not to tell when there are clear limits of confidentiality
- Give a lecture about right or wrong
- Say “forget it”, “you’ll get over it” or other such minimising statements
- Give excessive pity
- Engage in general staffroom discussion about the disclosure

Staff must be aware that a disclosure can arouse in them strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness. It is important to control these feelings – they can be worked through after the disclosure with the Principal, Counsellor, etc.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme

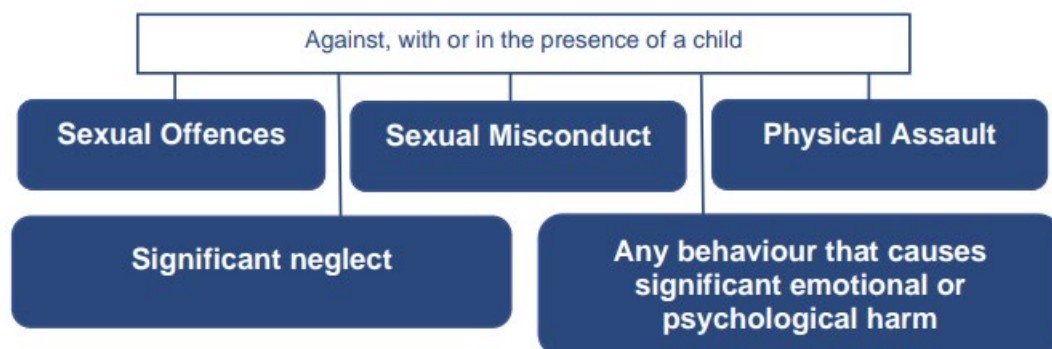
The Reportable Conduct Scheme makes Western Australian children safer. The Scheme compels heads of organisations that exercise care, supervision or authority over children to notify allegations of, or convictions for, child abuse by their employees to the Ombudsman and then investigate these allegations. The Ombudsman will monitor, oversee and review these investigations.

The Scheme implements key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and provides that child abuse in organisations will always be:

- Notified to an impartial and independent body;
- Investigated fully; and
- Dealt with to ensure children are protected from abuse within institutions.

What is reportable conduct?

Reportable conduct includes certain criminal convictions (reportable convictions) and reportable allegations. There are currently five types of reportable conduct:



What is a reportable allegations?

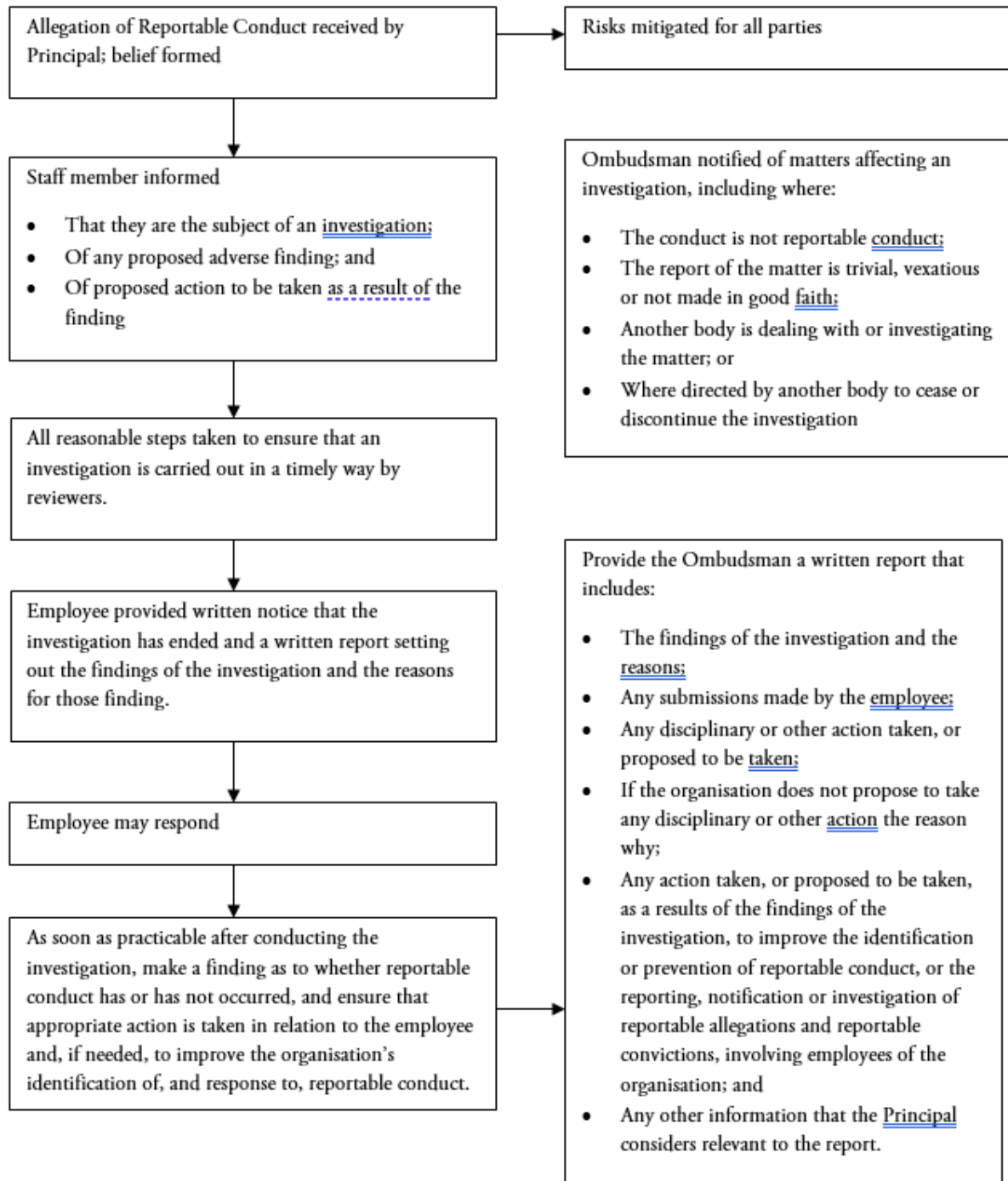
A reportable allegation is any information that leads a person to form a belief on reasonable grounds that an employee of an organisation covered by the Scheme has engaged in reportable conduct, whether or not the conduct is alleged to have occurred in the course of the employee's employment.

As an employee of Kingsway Christian College you are an employee of an organisation that exercises care, supervision or authority over children you are required to notify the Principal of any reportable conduct allegations / convictions you become aware of.

Once belief is formed by the reportee, they will notify the Principal. In consultation with the reportee, the Principal will complete an initial assessment which will deem the need for reporting.

The Principal is the official reporter under this scheme. Where the outcome of the initial assessment deems a report to be made to the authorities, The [online form](#) is completed and submitted by the Principal. The Principal will immediately notify the Chair of the Board.

Where deemed appropriate after evaluation by the Principal, a formal investigation will be conducted in accordance with the relevant regulatory and internal processes.



The College will provide written notice when the investigation had ended.

At no time will the College publish information that may identify a child the subject of reportable conduct or someone who reports conduct and will not disclose information to a child or person with parental responsibility if it would put the wellbeing the child or anyone's safety at risk; contravene

the Children and Community Services Act 2004s.124F and 240; or compromise another investigation; or, if the child has sufficient maturity and does not consent to the disclosure.

Relevant Legislation and Authority

Children and Community Services Act 2004

Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008

Criminal Code Act (1913)

Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006 (changes to s204B of the Criminal Code

Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004

National Principles for Child Safe Organisation

Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2022

APPENDICES

Appendices relating to the policy:

Appendix 1 : College Procedures

Appendix 2: Grooming Information

Appendix 3 : Other Resources

Appendix 4 : Recognising Child Abuse

Appendix 5: Quick Reference Reporting Table

Appendix 6 : Reportable Conduct Information Sheets

COLLEGE PROCEDURES

All school staff have a responsibility to act if they have concerns or knowledge that abuse or neglect may be occurring. These concerns must not be the subject of general staff room discussion.

An assessment of a student's behaviour must be made in the context of a staff member's overall knowledge of the student, rather than in isolation.

For all instances that involve concerns of a sexual nature, refer to the Mandatory Reporting section, otherwise follow these procedures

Strong Concerns or Indications or Disclosure

If a staff member has strong concerns of abuse or neglect, or if a student discloses abuse or neglect directly to a staff member, or indirectly through a friend, the staff member must immediately inform the Principal. All staff must be aware of the immediate needs of students making disclosures and respond accordingly (see Appendices).

Staff must ensure that anecdotal records and any written or verbal information regarding concerns or disclosures are regarded as strictly confidential, stored securely and used in a professional manner.

In situations where staff believe children are being maltreated by parents/caregivers, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) or the Police Child Abuse Squad should be advised before advising parents/caregivers. These agencies will then decide on the provision of advice to parents/caregivers and any further action. Police and CPFS are available to provide advice on child abuse concerns. Staff of the College are not to investigate or determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred. This is the role of CPFS and/or the Police.

Concern but No Disclosure

Staff who are concerned that abuse or neglect may be occurring must keep brief, written and dated records of their observations and concerns, and should consult with the Principal. A staff member who has a welfare concern should report this (see diagram).

Care and Support

Students who have disclosed, or about whom there is a child protection concern, will have a care and support program implemented by the relevant school Principal or delegated staff. CPFS staff are available to assist in designing the most appropriate school support program where necessary.

Student Disclosures of Abuse and Neglect

It is not easy for students to disclose abuse and neglect and they will usually only do so with great hesitation. They may have been coerced, bribed or threatened into secrecy. They may be very fearful of being blamed; of other people's reactions and of the consequences disclosure will have for

everyone involved. Students are likely to feel guilt because the abuse or neglect occurred, because they told another person before telling a parent/caregiver, or because they are ‘dobbing in’ the parent/caregiver or friend. Conversely, students may feel relieved and hopeful that the abuse or neglect will stop.

A disclosure may be accidental or purposeful.

- If purposeful, students will have made a decision to tell someone about the abuse or neglect and will be more ‘ready’; however, this will not ease the burden of feelings and trauma associated with disclosing. They may hint or tell only part of the story to gauge the staff member’s reaction before disclosing more fully.
- If accidental, students will not be prepared. Such a disclosure could occur in a class or in a group with other students. In this case it is important to use the strategy of ‘protective interruption’

Staff shall not agree to a student's demands for confidentiality or requests that parents and/or other legal authorities not be informed of their disclosure when the welfare or safety of the student is in question.

Suicidal Behaviour and Non-Suicidal Self Injury

Staff having a concern that a student may be at risk of self-harm or suicide must immediately act in accordance with the Critical Incident Management Policy - Suicidal Behaviour and NSSI.

Response To Disclosures Of Abuse Or Neglect

There may be times when a student makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect. Staff should be aware of the immediate needs of these students and what to do in these circumstances.

- use ‘protective interrupting’ if students begin to disclose in class or in a public area to protect them from sharing the information with too many other people:
 - acknowledge that you have heard them and stop them from disclosing any further;
 - be supportive and gently indicate that they might tell you about it in a more private situation; and
 - quietly arrange to see them as soon as possible, in a situation away from other students.
- establish clear limits on confidentiality by telling the child that a report will be made to a person who will be able to provide help and protection and that you will help them through the process;
- put your own feelings aside and listen as if the information is not sensational;
- provide reassurance that you believe them, that it is right to tell and do not think that they are to blame or make judgements about what has happened;
- listen to students in a private location within the school;
- be supportive and understanding;

- be empathetic to student feelings;
- acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such thing
- try to identify students' fears;
- let students tell the event in their own words;
- if you are unable to answer all the questions of the child, it is OK to let them know;
- Once you have established that they have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed, do not pursue the conversation any further. This is important to ensure that questions cannot be raised later about possible manipulation of the disclosure;
- allow students the option of support during any agency interview and reassure them of the availability of continuing support;
- document the conversation that you have had remembering as accurately as you can, the words and phrases used by the child to describe what has happened to them;
- document the disclosure and subsequent discussion and actions;
- explain what will happen next; and
- try to stay with the student after the disclosure to provide a sense of security until necessary steps have been taken to ensure their safety and support.

Staff must be mindful that they:

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

Staff must be aware that a disclosure can arouse within them strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness. It is important to control these feelings; they can be worked through after the disclosure.

Children Left at School

- All avenues must be used to contact the child's family or emergency contacts.
- If the College is unable to make any contact with the child's family, the Principal may contact CPFS (Child Protection and Family Support).
- In order to ensure students are adequately supervised at the end of the school day, College staff will collect any unsupervised Primary children at 4pm and have them supervised by Kingsway Afterschool Care on our behalf.

UNDERSTANDING GROOMING BEHAVIOUR

Grooming in a child protection context refers to deliberate actions undertaken to engage in sexual activity with a child. It differs from sexual abuse in that it is primarily a preparatory activity occurring before abuse occurs, but is continued during and after the abuse to ensure the safety of the groomer.

Grooming is a subtle, gradual, and escalating process of building trust with a child and those around the child, both children and adults, with the express purpose of the sexual gratification of the perpetrator, this generally involves engaging in sexual activity with the child. It is deliberate and purposeful and occurs both before and after the abuse. Abusers may groom children and supporting adults for weeks, months, or even years before any sexual abuse actually takes place. The grooming may occur in person, via cyber media and/or other forms of communication.

A committed offender will employ grooming behaviour from an early stage and because it is so subtle and gradual the child may not even be aware that the actual abuse when it occurs, wrong or harmful. The grooming occurs with the child but also with those supporting networks around the child which might normally act as a deterrent or protective element. The perpetrator will invest significant energy and patience to minimise the risk of detection and exposure.

The groomer will employ manipulation, guilt, shame, bribery, coercion or exploit low self-esteem to psychologically manipulate the child. As a result, the child becomes increasingly dependent on the groomer and increasingly alienated from protective elements including possible sources to disclose to. This is a deliberate strategy employed to maintain the secrecy of the abuse and to ensure the silence of the child.

The groomer will exploit any vulnerabilities of the protective elements around the child, including parent and family circumstances and school systemic weaknesses. Groomers are very adept at identifying anomalies, boundary ambiguities and any lack of systemic awareness, and then using them to deflect attention from their own actions and intentions.

While distinguishing between appropriate intent and inappropriate intent is often difficult, particularly for a child, it is essential that schools have very clear expectations and boundaries around employee behaviours so that there can be rigorous accountability when dealing with staff.

Schools must work to improve their knowledge and understanding in this area so they are able to challenge existing practice, recognise unprofessional behaviour and build a shared understanding of what a safe school is.

Grooming behaviour with children may include, but is not limited to:

- Selecting, befriending a child and gaining his or her trust, exploiting the child's vulnerabilities.
- Testing a child's boundaries through telling inappropriate jokes, roughhousing, backrubs, tickling, or sexual games.

- Moving from non-sexual touching to “accidental” sexual touching. This typically happens during play so the child may not even identify it as purposeful, inappropriate touching. It is often done slowly so the child is gradually desensitized to the touch.
- Manipulating the child to not tell anyone about what is happening. The abuser may use a child’s fear, embarrassment, or guilt about what has happened. Sometimes, the abuser uses bribery, threats, or coercion.
- Causing the child to feel responsible for the abuse. Children may not notice or may become confused as the contact becomes increasingly intimate and sexual.

Grooming behaviour with adolescents may include additional strategies, such as:

- Identifying with the adolescent. The abuser may appear to be the only one who understands him/her.
- Displaying common interests in sports, music, movies, video games, television shows, etc.
- Recognizing and filling the adolescent’s need for affection and attention.
- Giving gifts or special privileges to the adolescent.
- Allowing or encouraging the adolescent to break rules (e.g., smoking, drinking, using drugs, viewing pornography).
- Communicating with the adolescent outside of the person’s role (e.g., teacher, or coach). This could include, for example, texting or emailing the teen without the parents’ knowledge.

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

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

Preventing or interrupting the grooming process:

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

Within a school context, holding all staff members accountable to the school Code of Conduct and challenging boundary crossings and violations is one of the most effective strategies to combating grooming behaviour.

OTHER RESOURCES

Cyber Predators

The internet is one of the main sources of communication for young people today. The popularity of various social media as well as chat rooms, discussion groups and interactive games makes them a very attractive place for predators as they can remain virtually anonymous whilst participating in a range of paedophilic activity. There are significant concerns in this area, and schools, parents and students need to be informed consumers of this space.

Children need to think carefully about a handle they choose. Handles such as *Angel-Babe*, *Sweet-Sixteen* and *SexyKid* appear harmless on the outset, however can attract the wrong attention. Paedophiles are often attracted to people with these types of names.

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

Domestic and Family Violence

Background

Children have often been described as the silent victims of domestic violence. They are in a position of great risk of suffering by being exposed to domestic violence.

Domestic violence is an abuse of power, usually by men against women, in a relationship or after separation. The abuse of power most commonly manifests as physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, but may also include economic and/or social abuse.

The term 'family violence' is also being used interchangeably with the term 'domestic violence'. Family violence is preferred by many, as it encompasses all forms of violence in family and other relationships of mutual obligation and support.

Child abuse and domestic violence often co-exist. Children in households with family and domestic violence are not just 'witnessing' a tragedy, they are involved in various ways in the violent incident. Trauma of this nature is thought to create additional harm because it overwhelms the child's developing sense of coping mechanisms. Feelings of helplessness, fear of death and a state of constant alertness are the daily burden of children living with chronic violence and abuse. Overall, research indicates a consistent finding that child witnesses exhibit a host of behavioural and emotional problems when compared to other children.

The effects of the violence vary according to the age of the child, the frequency of the violence and the level of support provided by external agencies. The effects of witnessing chronic or extreme violence between parents/caregivers can be just as debilitating as other forms of abuse. Preschoolers, in general, believe that they are the cause of the violence; primary school children begin to learn that

violence is an acceptable means of conflict resolution; and secondary students see the violence as the parents/caregivers' problem and often regard the victim as responsible. Continued exposure to domestic violence through the secondary years has a significant influence on student development future adult behaviour.

Physical and/or behavioural indicators

- **Preschool:**
 - May blame themselves for the violence. (This may be a developmental phase phenomenon indicative of egocentricity).
 - Loss of newly acquired developmental skills, e.g. speech, motor and social skills.
 - Signs of fear/terror, e.g. yelling, irritability, hiding, running away, stuttering, or jumpy.
 - Psychosomatic complaints.
 - Regressed behaviour; e.g. wetting pants.
 - Reluctance to separate from parent and to go to stranger, e.g. may whine, cry and cling.
 - Social isolation.
 - May show extremes in behaviour, e.g. aggressive versus passive.
- **Primary school age:**
 - May blame themselves for the violence at home or feel responsible.
 - Poor school performance, e.g. concentration difficulties and memory
 - Mood may be variable. May be sad and withdrawn, nervous and fearful, or may seem emotionally detached.
 - Social isolation.
 - Secrecy about the family; i.e. shame and embarrassment about the family secret.
 - Aggressive with peers.
 - Rebels against adults.
 - Physical/somatic complaints.
 - May be uncooperative, suspicious or guarded.
- **Adolescent:**
 - Acting out behaviour, e.g. school truancy, early sexual activity, substance use, and delinquency.
 - School performance problems.
 - Poor interpersonal skills, e.g. lack of respect for others, intolerance of difference and lack of empathy.
 - May respond aggressively or be withdrawn.
 - Depression.
 - Anxiety.
 - Somatic/physical symptoms.
 - Quick temper and explosive.
 - Unable to accept responsibility or blames others.
 - Disconnected from others, mistrustful, defensive.

- Lacks confidence but masks this with bravado
- Low self-esteem.

Given the strong co-existence between child abuse and domestic violence, school staff are required to act if they have concerns or knowledge that abuse or neglect may be occurring.

Paedophilia

The term 'paedophile' generally refers to an adult who likes and/or engages in sexual activities with children who are pre-pubescent or under the age of 12. A 'pederast' involves himself/herself with pubertal or post-pubertal children usually between the ages of 12 and 16.

Paedophiles can come from all walks of life and are often associated with groups that work with children eg. churches, youth programs, schools, clubs.

Paedophilia is regarded as a chronic condition characterised by behaviours that include:

- strong, but not necessarily sole, sexual interest in children;
- having multiple victims;
- fixing onto a certain age range and a particular gender
- actively seeking opportunities to be around children in their preferred age range. This explains why paedophiles are often in teaching or childcare positions, religious groups or youth groups/clubs. They are experts at making contact with children;
- collecting, distributing or displaying paedophile-related paraphernalia; and
- grooming their victims - they are usually very patient and can spend considerable time 'seducing' their victim.

INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The following is not an exhaustive list and examples are not necessarily exclusive to a single list. Children frequently show indicators from more than one category. Any of these indicators may suggest that a child is being abused, neglected or at risk of harm, however indicators should be viewed in the context of the student's age, medical and developmental history and capabilities. In addition, mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence within families.

Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bruises ➤ Burns ➤ Hair missing in tufts ➤ Lacerations and abrasions (especially to eyes, lips, gums and mouth) ➤ Missing or loosened teeth ➤ Self-mutilation ➤ Welts 	Behavioural Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fear of adults ➤ Frequent absences, with or without explanation from parents/caregivers ➤ Guarded or evasive answers to questions about causes of obvious injuries ➤ Injuries that are not consistent with a child's explanation of them ➤ Disclosure of abuse directly to an adult or indirectly to a friend ➤ Fear of going home
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Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Depression ➤ Eating disorders ➤ Lethargy or fatigue ➤ Symptoms of stress ➤ Evidence of drug abuse or dependence ➤ Wetting, soiling, smearing ➤ Psychosomatic complaints ➤ Psychological Trauma 	Behavioural Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aggressive or delinquent behaviour ➤ Attempted suicide ➤ Excessively complaint or passive behaviour ➤ Excessive shyness or withdrawal ➤ Low self-esteem ➤ Fire setting ➤ Truancy or school avoidance ➤ Deliberate harming of animals ➤ Poor peer relationships
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Neglect

Physical Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Abandonment ➤ Poor hygiene ➤ Lack of adequate or suitable clothing ➤ Inadequate nutrition ➤ Lack of medical or dental care ➤ Constant fatigue ➤ Developmental delays ➤ Untreated sore, boils or lice ➤ Lack of adequate supervision 	Behavioural Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Falling asleep in school ➤ Poor school attendance or alternatively always attends school, even when sick ➤ Poor academic performance ➤ Steals or begs for food or eats from bins ➤ Dull, apathetic appearance ➤ Engages in vandalism ➤ Engages in sexual misconduct ➤ Uses drugs or alcohol ➤ Early arrival at school or reluctance to leave
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Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Bruises or bleeding from external genitalia, vagina or anal regions➤ Blood stained underwear➤ Pregnancy or fear of pregnancy➤ Signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital area➤ Urinary tract infections	Behavioural Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Disclosure of involvement in sexual activity directly to an adult, indirectly to a friend or in a disguised way e.g. 'I know a person who....'➤ Inappropriate expression of affection➤ Inappropriate interest in sexual matters➤ Evidence of sexual themes in artwork, stories or play➤ Possession of pornographic materials➤ Promiscuity, exposure of sexual behaviour towards others➤ Use of sexual language inappropriate for child's age➤ Reluctance to change clothes in front of others➤ Wearing inappropriate clothing➤ Fear states e.g. anxiety, depression, obsessively neat, socially withdrawn or overly compliant behaviour➤ Poor peer relationships➤ Inability to concentrate in school
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The Department of Communities website includes information about [Recognising Child Abuse](#).

Common Myths About Child Abuse

An accurate understanding of the dynamics of child abuse is important, as the impact on the victim can be life changing. Common outcomes of abuse include drug abuse, suicide, eating disorders, low self-esteem, psychosomatic illness and self-mutilation.

Common myths about sexual abuse:

- Sex between adults and children is not dangerous if it is in the context of a loving relationship
- It is not the abuse which causes the problem but the effects of the intervention of others
- Those abused turn into abusers
- Children frequently lie about sexual abuse
- Sexual abuse is more common in lower socio-economic areas and families
- Only men sexually abuse children
- Sexual abusers are readily identified by 'normal' people

Common myths about general abuse:

- There will not be a problem because all the volunteers/employees are female
- There will not be a problem here because the young people come from privileged backgrounds and will complain if there is an issue of abuse
- If we get the selection procedures right we will eliminate the possibility of abuse
- We use police clearances here, so we are covered
- It is one of the other children's parents/brothers/sisters to whom I am entrusting the child/ren, so it will be OK
- We did not need to screen Mr Brown because he is a friend of the teacher, president, etc.
- My workers, volunteers and casuals are youth themselves so there is no risk
- We are pretty good at identifying young people here who are a bit 'odd'

Capacity to Recognise Abusers

On the whole, abusers are the least obvious people in our community. Many abusers hold positions of trust within the community with easy access to children and families.

A child abuser can be a member of the family or someone close to the family. A child abuser usually spends a lot of time grooming the child/ren with the child being made to feel that they are in some way complicit in the acts, thus making disclosure difficult.

REPORTABLE CONDUCT MATRIX

<u>A Reportable Incident Form</u> (used to be called a critical incident report)	<u>Mandatory Reporting</u>	<u>TRB Notice From Employer (if a teacher is suspended, dismissed or resigns)</u>	<u>The Reportable Conduct Scheme</u>
<p>Non-government schools must notify the Director General of reportable incidents within 48 hours by using the applicable incident notification form (below). This notification is additional to any other notifications that a school may need to make, for example, to the WA Police, Dept of Communities or the TRBWA.</p>	<p>Mandatory Reporters must report to the Department of Communities a belief, formed on reasonable grounds in the course of their work, paid or unpaid, that a child or young person (under 18 years) has been the subject of sexual abuse or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse by anyone.</p>	<p>Section 42 of the Teacher Registration Act 2012 (Act) requires employers of registered teachers to notify the Board of any investigation (even if not completed) where the employer is of the opinion that there was reason to believe that a teacher has engaged in serious misconduct or has been seriously incompetent.</p>	<p>The Reportable Conduct Scheme compels heads of organisations that exercise care, supervision or authority over children to notify allegations of, or convictions for, child abuse by their employees to the Ombudsman and then investigate these allegations.</p>
<p>What is a Reportable Incident?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The death of a student, staff member or visitor who is at school or during a school-related activity or following an incident at school or during a school-related activity. 2. An actual or potential injury, illness or trauma of a student, staff member or visitor who is at school or during a school-related activity, or following an incident at school or a school-related activity and where the incident has resulted or may result in significant impact. 3. An incident requiring police or other emergency services response when a student appears to have been taken or removed from the school or from a school-related activity without proper authority or goes missing and cannot be accounted for. 4. An incident requiring the school to be locked down or to evacuate staff and students, or reduce the number of students or staff attending, or to close for any duration for health or safety reasons. 5. The receipt of a complaint or allegation of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, committed against a student by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a staff member or another student; or b. another person on the school premises or during a school-related activity, whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past. 	<p>Question to ask - has a belief been formed, on reasonable grounds, in the course of paid or unpaid work, that a child (under 18 years) has been the subject of sexual abuse?</p> <p>Sexual abuse, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; or • the child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or • there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour. <p>Once a teacher has formed a belief based on reasonable grounds, in the course of their work, that individual teacher is required to make an MR and advise the school Principal. Prior to forming a belief, the teacher may, if they</p>	<p>What is Serious Misconduct or Serious Incompetence?</p> <p>Misconduct or Incompetence is considered serious if it results in a teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being suspended at the educational venue, or • being dismissed from teaching at the educational venue; or • resigning from the educational venue; or • no longer teaching at or being moved from the educational venue. <p>Notifications must be given within 30 days after the teacher was suspended, dismissed or ceased teaching at the educational venue. Failure to comply may incur a penalty of \$5000.</p> <p>Note - this form must still be used if the teacher is suspended, dismissed or resigns prior to the completion of your investigation.</p>	<p>What is a reportable allegation? What types of conduct need to be reported?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reportable allegation is any information that leads a person to form the belief that an employee has engaged in reportable conduct, whether or not the conduct is alleged to have occurred in the course of the employee's employment. <p>Conduct covered by the Scheme includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual offences; • Sexual misconduct; • Physical assault; and • Other prescribed offences. • Significant neglect of a child; and • Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child. <p>The College must also report to the Ombudsman on the outcome of the investigation, including responding to reportable conduct. Must also report</p>

6. Issuing a formal warning, a suspension or ceasing the employment of a staff member for a breach of the school's Code of Conduct involving suspected grooming behaviour.	wish, consult with appropriate colleagues with specialist knowledge, for example, the Principal, psychologist, or school counsellor. (See Child Protection Policy)		reportable convictions within 7 working days.
Lodgement - online form (*For Points 5&6 create a Mandatory report , Reportable conduct report and a Section 42 TRB report if it involves a teacher – refer to the Principal.)	Lodgement - online form (Consider also a Reportable conduct report and a Section 42 TRB report if it involves a teacher – refer to the Principal)	Lodgement - online form (Consider also a Mandatory report and a Reportable conduct report if it involves an employee – refer to the Principal)	Lodgement - online form (Consider also a Mandatory report , and a Section 42 TRB report if it involves a teacher – refer to the Principal)
Once submitted, the Principal completes a Reportable Incident Form and inform the Board Chair.	Once submitted, the Principal completes a Reportable Incident Form and inform the Board Chair.	Once submitted, follow up with Reportable Incident Form and inform the Board Chair.	Once submitted, follow up with Reportable Incident Form and inform the Board Chair

REPORTABLE CONDUCT INFORMATION SHEETS

[Ombudsman WA: Information Sheet FAQs](#)

[Ombudsman WA: When to Notify Reportable Conduct](#)

[Ombudsman WA: Information Sheet: Employees](#)

[Ombudsman WA: Non-Government School Flowchart](#)