

Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse

Child abuse can take many forms. The abuser may be a parent, carer, staff member, volunteer, another adult or even another child. Unfortunately the nature of child abuse is complex. The abuse may occur over time and potential risk indicators are often difficult to detect. Even our legal obligations for reporting allegations of child abuse can vary depending on the circumstances of the incident.

The School will take appropriate, prompt action in response to **all** allegations or disclosures of abuse, neglect, inappropriate behaviour or concerns about child safety by reporting all matters to the Victorian Child Protection Service, the Commission for Children and Young People, or the Police, depending on the allegation or disclosure made.

St Peter's Lutheran School has established simple and accessible procedures for anyone to report a child abuse concern internally to one of the School's **Child Protection Officers**.

St Peter's Lutheran School has developed and implemented procedures for Council members, staff and volunteers for responding to allegations and disclosures of child abuse, or suspected child abuse, including procedures for support following a disclosure by a student. Reporting procedures for Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and other community members are also included in our **Child Protection and Safety Policy** which is available on our public website.

Age appropriate reporting procedures for students are developed through our **pastoral care program**.

This section describes our work systems, practices, policies and procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse both internally and externally. This includes:

[Managing Your Initial Response to a Child Protection Incident](#)

[Responding to an Emergency](#)

[Reporting a Child Abuse Concern Internally](#)

[General Legal Obligation to "Act to Protect" and to Report Child Sexual Abuse](#)

[Mandatory Reporting](#)

[Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers and Others](#)

[Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Child](#)

[Conduct that is Reportable to the Victorian Institute of Teachers \(VIT\)](#)

[Communication with Parents/Carers](#)

[Support for Students Interviewed at the School](#)

Making Additional Reports

Child Protection Complaints Management

Confidentiality & Privacy

All of the School's procedures for reporting and responding to allegation of child abuse are designed and implemented taking into account the diverse characteristics of the School community.

A summary of these procedures are made publicly available on the School's website through our **Child Protection Record Keeping**

Child Protection and Safety Policy and are accessible to all children, school staff and the wider community.

The School will respond to all allegations of child abuse in an appropriate manner including:

- informing the appropriate authorities and fully cooperating with any resulting investigation
- protecting any child connected to the allegation until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected
- taking particular measures in response to an allegation that concerns a culturally diverse child or a child with a disability, and
- securing and retaining records of the allegation and the School's response to it.

Documenting Your Observations and Actions

It is critical that all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Council members, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse. This information may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of court proceedings. Your notes may also assist you later if you're required to provide evidence to support your decisions regarding the handling of child protection incidents.

For more information about how to record observations, disclosures or allegations refer to the **Child Protection Record Keeping** section of this Program.

Preserving Evidence

When an incident of suspected child abuse occurs at the School, consider all of the following:

- environment: do not clean up the area and preserve the sites where the alleged incident occurred
- clothing: take steps to ensure that the person who has allegedly committed the abuse and the child who has allegedly been abused remain in their clothing. If this is not possible, ensure the clothes are not washed, handled as little as possible and stored in a sealed bag
- other physical items: ensure that items such as weapons, bedding and condoms are untouched
- potential witnesses: reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent discussion of the incident between those involved in the alleged incident.

This policy was reviewed in February 2021 and is scheduled for review in 2024.