

DSM Policy

Serious Incident and Mandatory Reporting

Deutsche Schule Melbourne Inc, ABN 52 936 931 854



Statement

The values and ethos of Deutsche Schule Melbourne (DSM) – A German English Bilingual School vision statement form the foundation for the school's child safe policy. The Serious Incident and Mandatory Reporting Policy forms part of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and should as such be read in conjunction with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Rationale

DSM is committed to supporting children and their families and in protecting their students and has an organisational duty of care to take reasonable precautions to prevent harm to children through the reporting of child abuse (sexual or physical abuse) and neglect by any individual associated with the school, while the child is under the school's supervision or authority.

All school staff members have duty of care obligations and obligations arising out of the Child Safe Standards to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable injury to children and young people. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect their safety, health and wellbeing.

Victorian schools are mandated under Ministerial Order 1359 to ensure child safe standards are in place to protect children from abuse and neglect. This contains the creation of an inclusive culture that is non-tolerant of racism, as well as screening, supervision and training of personnel to identify and respond to indicators of harm.

In response to the Betrayal of Trust Report, the Victorian Government has introduced criminal offences to protect children from sexual abuse. Under these reforms a failure to report (failure to disclose), or take action in relation to suspected child sexual abuse (failure to protect) can now constitute a criminal offence.

Teachers are further mandated under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA) to take responsibility in the prevention of child abuse and neglect and must notify cases of physical and sexual abuse to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Child Protection when they form a belief on reasonable grounds 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 harm of that type. Failure to disclose is a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1958.

Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, a child protection scheme, Victorian schools are required to notify the Commission of Children and Young People (CCYP) if there is an allegation of 'reportable conduct' made against one of its employees (including Principal, teachers, other staff, board members, contractors, volunteers or health staff members). There must be a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence or misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, or
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child, or
- significant neglect of a child, or
- misconduct involving any of the above

The Deutsche Schule Melbourne is committed to provide an environment where students feel safe and supported and adopts a vigilant zero tolerance policy in regards to child abuse or harm.

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Definitions

Teachers

An assistant, student teacher, teacher, specialist teacher, and every person that forms part of the educational staff of the school, including any person employed in a teaching position (Education Act, 1958).

Child

Under Victorian Law a child is regarded as being under 17 years of age.

Child Abuse

Child abuse includes any instance of physical or sexual harm (including grooming), emotional or psychological harm, serious or significant neglect and family violence involving a child.

Child connected work

Work that is authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST)

Child FIRST is a Victorian Government initiative to provide support and help for vulnerable families, children and babies. Anyone may make a referral to Child First if they have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing.

Child Safe Standards

Victorian schools are mandated under Ministerial Order 1359 to ensure child safe standards are in place to protect children from abuse and neglect. This contains the creation of an inclusive culture, as well as screening, supervision and training of personnel to identify and respond to indicators of harm.

Child Protection Service

The role of the DHHS Child Protection Service is to ensure that children are protected from significant harm when their parent or caregiver is unable or unwilling to provide that protection. They are able to intervene to protect children and young people at risk of significant harm.

Child in need of protection

A 'child in need of protection' is defined under section s163 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.) if any of the following grounds exist:

- A child has been abandoned
- A child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing or able to provide care for the child.
- A child that has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of:
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Family violenceEmotional abuse or psychological harm of such kind that the child is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.
- The child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be, significantly harmed and the parents are not providing basic medical, surgical or remedial care.

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Indicators of harm

There may be a single or many indicators of harm. The presence thereof does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, repeated occurrence of one or of many indicators should alert teachers to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

It is critical for school staff to be able to recognise the physical or behavioural signs of child abuse. In many circumstances they may be the only indication that a child is subject to abuse. An extensive list of physical and behavioral indicators for each type of abuse can be found on <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/identify.aspx#link75>.

Failure to Disclose

In addition to mandatory reporting obligations under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.), the Crimes Act 1958 (amended) (Vic.) imposes a legal obligation upon all adults to report to Victoria Police [in addition to Child Protection] where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child.

Failure to Protect

The Crimes Act 1958 (amended) (Vic.) provides that people in positions of authority, such as principals, must take action to protect children where they know that a person associated with their organisation poses a substantial risk of sexually abusing children.

Forming a belief on reasonable grounds

Section 183 states that **any** person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child's health, wellbeing or safety is at risk and the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child, **must** report that belief to a protective intervener and the reasonable grounds for it. You may have suspicion on reasonable grounds if:

- Your observations of behaviour of the particular child or your knowledge of the child generally leads you to suspect that abuse is occurring.
- A child tells you that he/she knows someone who has been abused.
- Someone reliable such as relative, friend, neighbour or sibling tells you of the abuse to a child.

If you receive a disclosure from a current student or former student of school age, you must take the disclosure seriously and take immediate action following the Four Critical Actions. If you receive disclosure by a former student that is no longer of school age you must still act.

Grooming

Crimes Act 1958 (amended) (Vic.), under the 'Failure to Disclose' offence and duty of care, any person who suspects a child is being groomed by an adult must report their concerns to Victoria Police.

Mandatory Reporting

Section 184(1), CYFA, requires mandated reporters to report their belief, when the belief is formed in the course of practicing their profession. A report must be made *as soon as practicable* after forming the belief, and *on each occasion* on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

There may be times when two or more mandated professionals have formed a belief about the same child on the same occasion. In this situation it is sufficient that only one of the mandated professionals make a report. The other is obliged to ensure that the report has been made and that all the grounds for their own belief were included in the report made by the other person (s. 184(2)).

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In the case where one mandated professional directs another mandated professional not to make a report, and one professional continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, then that professional is legally obliged to make a report to Child Protection.

Mandated staff members

Mandated staff members include the Principal, School Counsellor, teachers registered to teach or who have a permission to teach (including pre service and visiting teachers) and registered practitioners, nurses and members of the police force.

Non-mandated staff members

Any adult or member of the school community who forms a reasonable belief that another adult has committed a sexual offence (including grooming) against a child under the age of 16 in Victoria must report this information to the police as soon as possible.

Protection of Reporters & Confidentiality

Under section 189, CYFA, a mandatory reporter, who made their report in good faith, is protected. A report does not constitute unprofessional conduct or breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter, nor does it make the reporter subject to any liability in respect of it. The name of the reporter or any information leading to the revelation of the reporter should not be disclosed to any person other than the protective intervener.

Reportable Conduct

Reportable conduct is a sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or within the presence of a child; behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm and significant neglect of a child. A reportable allegation means information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee or volunteer has committed a reportable conduct or misconduct.

Principles

DSM is committed to protect its students from all forms of child abuse and to implement clear procedures for reporting and recording allegations of suspected child abuse and grooming.

The school will create a supportive culture in which children, staff, volunteers and families feel confident and comfortable in discussing allegations of abuse, grooming or child safety concerns.

Goals

The goals are aligned with the goals of the Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and include:

- Providing an inclusive, welcoming and safe school environment during and outside of school hours.
- Promoting a culturally inclusive environment that is free of racial or ethnic discrimination.
- Promoting a child-safe school culture in the school community.
- Taking 'reasonable precautions' to prevent abuse.
- Take reasonable steps to remove or reduce the risk of child sexual abuse.
- Providing support to students on a continuum, from primary prevention, through various stages of intervention and restoring well-being.
- Promoting practices and processes that provide resilience and connectedness in students.
- Providing students with coping and social skills that empower them to best handle a range of unsafe situations.

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- Promoting programs that help students to provide for their own safety, such as personal safety and protective behaviour, peer support and mediation, healthy relationships, buddy and transition programs.
- Empowering students to seek support, services, confidantes at school and/or externally.
- Train and encourage all staff to report their concerns for a child in need of protection to DHHS Child Protection.
- Providing students with care and support, offering assistance and helping them deal with the after-effects of any experience,
- Supporting and monitoring recovery of students and teachers involved; Counselling support will be offered to all parties in relation to a reported allegation.
- Reviewing and evaluating incident management plans regularly.

Scope

This policy applies to members of the School Board, the Principal, school staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

The policy applies to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, school staff, visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment.

Roles and Responsibilities

The **DSM Board** is accountable for managing the risk of abuse and must develop and implement risk management strategies in regards to child safety and monitor and evaluate these for their effectiveness of the implementations of its risk controls. The Board will ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to Board members and the school staff in regards to:

Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing risk of child abuse:

As part of the on-boarding process for new Board members: Guidance and training opportunities are provided to new Board members, in particular in the areas of governance and risk (e.g. governance sessions provided by ISV and VRQA) and in regards to the school's Child Safe and Critical Incident and Mandatory Reporting policies. Board members are made aware regularly of current training opportunities designed for Board members. As part of the induction program of new teachers and interns and as part of the annual professional development programs for all school staff.

Child abuse risks in the school environment and child safety standards:

Child safety, including child abuse, is a standing item in all Board meetings and staff meetings and associated risks discussed as members of the school become aware of them. Critical incidents are reported to the Board for evaluation and improvement. Staff training is provided before the start of each school year, with interim additional training or supplementation with online training as required (<https://educationvic.elmotalent.com.au/register#!/index>).

Any **person in a position of authority** within or associated with the school (including the Chair of the Board, Board members, Principal, senior staff and Business Manager) has a specific duty to protect children against the risk of a sexual assault. If they know of a substantial risk another adult associated with the school may commit a sex offence against a child within the school's care, they must take reasonable steps to remove or reduce the risk of child sexual assault and must report the matter to Victoria Police (Failure to Protect offence).

The **Principal** is responsible for the implementation of the Child Safety and Wellbeing and Serious Incident and Mandatory Reporting policies and procedures on an operational level to embed an organisational culture of child

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safety and is responsible for all aspects of school management including assisting the teacher, child and relevant specialist authorities, if requested.

The Principal is further responsible to manage the school's overall response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, that the allegation or disclosure is responded to promptly and taken seriously. The Principal must monitor the overall school's compliance with the Child Safe and Serious Incident and Mandatory Reporting Policies and must make sure that a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse is responded to appropriately.

The school will assist **teachers** in their roles to provide a safe and supportive environment for students, provide them with the skills and knowledge to identify possible harm and guidelines on how to respond to concerns of safety and well-being.

The school clearly outlines on how to notify DHHS Child Protection Services for **persons legally mandated** and also for voluntary (**non-mandated**) notifications.

Where an allegation or disclosure is made against the Principal, the allegation or disclosure needs to be made to the Chair of the Board. In the absence of the Principal, the allegation or disclosure needs to be made the Chair of the Board.

By fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in this procedure, does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

Strategies

The strategies below should be read in conjunction with the strategies outlined in the Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and are designed to identify and mitigate the risk(s) of child abuse. The Child Safety and Wellbeing policy clearly sets out strategies in relation to:

- School Board
- Engagement and on-boarding of staff, volunteers and visitors
- Training and Compliance
- Empowering students
- Online risk and cyber safety
- Physical Environment
- Communications
- Assessment and Review
- Ministerial Order 1359 – the Child Safe Standards

Further strategies in relation to Serious Incident and Mandatory Reporting include:

- The school will provide students with programs that strengthen their ability to provide for their own safety, to recognise harm and actions they can take. These programs may include Body Safety training or Fitzroy Police workshops.
- DSM promotes open communication between all members of the school.
- The Principal will make regular and frequent public statements to raise awareness of the school community's collective responsibility in reporting allegations of child abuse.
- The Critical Incident and Mandatory Reporting and Child Safe policies are made publicly available.
- The Board will ensure that the procedures are sensitive to the diverse characteristics of the school community,

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- The DSM Board will ensure the school's 'Serious Incident and Mandatory Reporting' policy is reviewed annually and after every incident.
- The DSM Board will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.
- The DSM Board will require the Principal to provide regular feedback on the implementation of the policy in Board meetings.

Immediate Actions

Depending on the nature of the concern or complaint, the below immediate actions may be taken by the School to protect any child or student connected to any complaint or concern relating to child abuse or harm, including those involving a volunteer or contractor.

- Determine whether the complaint or concern amounts to reportable conduct and report to the CCYP, Victoria Police and Child Protection
- Identify and mitigate any ongoing risks to the child's wellbeing and safety
- Seek and adopt advice from external supports including CCYP, Victoria Police and Child Protection on measures that can be taken to protect the child and keep them safe
- Issue a School Community Safety Order banning the member of the community from being on school premises for a period of time or until the complaint is resolved.
- Arrange an urgent meeting with the student's parent or carer as soon as possible to discuss further strategies to keep the child safe such as recommending a period of remote learning from home
- Offer in-school counselling to the child and anyone else impacted by the complaint or concern

These actions must remain in place until the complaint or concern is resolved.

Complaint Resolution

There may be concerns or complaints about the school staff's management of an incident in particular by parents/carers/guardians. School staff must consider whether the complaint raises issues about unreported abuse and/or risk of abuse. Should any new information come to light, which leads the staff member to believe a child may be subject to, or at risk of any unreported abuse, then the staff member must follow the Responding to complaints or concerns procedure (the Four Critical Actions), otherwise the DSM Complaints and Grievances policy should be followed.

Policy Review

This policy shall be reviewed annually and after any incident.

Revised September 2023

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Procedure: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

Appendix 2 - The four actions are summarised on the Flow Chart: Four Critical Actions-Child Abuse

Appendix 3 – Procedure: Recording your actions (template)

DSM Procedure

Responding to Incidences, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse



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Statement

This Procedure is to be read in conjunction with the Child Safe Policy and Serious Incident and Mandatory Reporting Policy.

Rationale

If a student discloses an incident of abuse to a staff member at DSM, the staff should respond effectively by taking the following four key actions:

Action 1 - Responding to an emergency

This action applies in an emergency, e.g. there is immediate harm to the student, otherwise proceed to Action 2.

If a student's immediate safety is compromised, a student is at risk of harm or is involved in any risk taking activity that poses a high risk to the student, you must take reasonable steps to protect them. This includes:

- ensuring the student's immediate health and safety is supported by an appropriate staff member
 - if the student seems at ease in your company, stay with them
- ensuring the alleged offender (school staff, visitor or other person/student) does not have access to the student
- where the offender is another student or staff of the school, the person will be immediately suspended until the issue is resolved (return to school or dismissal/expulsion)
- arranging and providing urgent medical assistance where necessary by:
 - administering first aid assistance
 - calling 000 for an ambulance and following any instructions from emergency service officers/paramedics
- calling 000 for urgent police assistance if the person who is alleged to have engaged in the abuse poses an immediate risk to the health and safety of any person
 - you should also identify a contact person at the organisation for future liaison with police
- taking reasonable steps to preserve evidence, such as the environment, clothing, other items, and potential witnesses until the police or other relevant authorities arrive on the premises.

If a student has experienced or disclosed abuse or serious neglect, you should provide support by:

- listen to them carefully and let the student use their own words to explain what has occurred
- reassure the student that you are taking what they are saying seriously, that it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing
- explain to them that this information will need to be shared with others, such as their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, Child Protection and the police
- not make promises to the student, such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe
- as appropriate, complete an incident form with or on behalf of the student.

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- support the student throughout any interviews conducted by Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection at school.
- where appropriate the child's parents/carers/guardians should be present for interviews.

Where a disclosure is made by a student in a group setting, you should provide support by:

- acknowledging that they have been heard
- indicate your support by reassuring the students that what the student has said is important
- quietly arrange an appropriate time to see the student away from the other students - as soon as possible!

Consideration must be given by staff to providing developmentally and culturally appropriate support to children and when working with families and must take into account the diversity of all children, including children with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students and student with a refugee background.

Other students and staff involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicious may be impacted and under stress. The principal must ensure that other impacted children are offered and provided with appropriate support. The principal must further support impacted staff throughout the process. Further staff wellbeing support is also available from Independent Schools Victoria.

Action 2 - Report

As soon as the student's immediate safety concerns are addressed, you must report all incidents or disclosures of abuse or serious neglect to the Principal and to relevant authorities. You may be committing a criminal offence if you fail to report allegations of physical or sexual abuse of a child.

- Victoria Police (via your local police station http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=557) with information provided to include if the client has a cognitive disability or mental illness and will need support of an independent third person during interview or when a statement is being taken
- DHHS Child Protection¹ if you believe a child is at risk of significant harm and/or in need of protection. Please refer to the [Professionals' reporting guide](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/protocols/professionals-reporting-guide) <<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/protocols/professionals-reporting-guide>> for further information.
- the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) if the matter is reportable conduct, and ensuring the report is made [within the required timeframes](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/Responsibilities-of-the-head-of-an-organisation.docx) <<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/Responsibilities-of-the-head-of-an-organisation.docx>>. See below for further information about the reportable conduct scheme

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police

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Recording and retention of documents

As soon as possible after the incident or disclosure, record the information using the student's words while ensuring that the documentation is recorded accurately and stored securely. The Procedure: Recording your Actions will assist you in making a report and gathering relevant information to report to the Principal, as well as to any authorities. Likewise, ensure that any incident report, if required, is submitted within the appropriate timeframes.

Documents are stored on the school server and backed up daily.

Supporting children who are interviewed at school:

Where the disclosure is in regards to a student allegedly abusing another child:

- the police interview should be done preferably in the presence of the parents/carers or another independent person that is not a school staff member.

Where DHHS Child Protection interviews a child at school:

- the school must be notified
- identification must be seen, before allowing access to the child
- the principal should nominate him/herself as an appropriate school staff member to be present as support person for the child during the interview.
- As an independent person, school staff must refrain from providing opinions or accounts of the event during the interview.

Action 3 - Contact parents, carers or guardians

DSM should advise Child Protection and/or Victoria Police when a student has disclosed allegations of abuse perpetrated by their parent, carer, guardian or another family member. This is critical to ensuring the safety of the student as well as to avoid compromising any investigations conducted by the relevant authorities or agencies.

Where appropriate, a senior representative of the school should make sensitive and professional contact with parents, carers or guardians of the child as soon as possible on the day of the incident or disclosure.

Where it is suspected that a student has been, or is at risk of being abused, a parent, carer or guardian of the student must be notified as soon as practicable. This is not applicable where it is known or suspected that the parent, carer or guardian is the alleged perpetrator of harm or abuse and/or is unlikely to protect the child. This enables parents, carers and guardians to take steps to:

- prevent or limit their child's exposure to further abuse; and
- ensure that their child receives the support that they require.

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During this conversation, it is important to:

- remain calm
- be empathic to feelings
- validate concerns
- provide appropriate details of the incident, disclosure and/or suspicion of child abuse
- outline the action the organisation has taken to date
- inform them of who the incident, disclosure and/or suspicion has been reported to
- where relevant, provide the name and contact telephone number of Child Protection and/or the investigating police officer and advise as to whether they are likely to be contacted by these authorities
- inform them the investigation may take some time and ask what further information they would like and how staff can assist them
- offer for the organisation to provide support to the child
- inform them that the organisation can make referrals to support services
- if possible, invite the parents, carers or guardians to attend a meeting where a support plan can be prepared to ensure appropriate support can be provided for their child.

Action 4 - Provide on-going support

Experiences of child abuse can cause trauma and significantly impact the mental health and wellbeing of children.

In addition to reporting and referral to relevant authorities, the school plays a central role in addressing this trauma and has a responsibility to ensure that students feel safe and supported. This should be done in partnership and with the consent of parents, carers or guardians.

Support can include referral to wellbeing professionals and community services (such as counselling) and may involve the development of a support plan.

Support in the form of debriefing should also be provided to any impacted staff members.

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Revised, August 2018

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2.**

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Security Services Unit.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978.**

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- Employee Conduct Branch

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978.**

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Security Services Unit.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or chairperson.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

*A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- **how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

AREA

North Division **1300 664 9777**
 South Division **1300 655 795**
 East Division **1300 360 391**
 West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
 West Division (Metro) **1300 664 9777**

AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78.**

CHILD FIRST

<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>

ORANGE DOOR

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station **DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT (03) 9589 6266**

STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT (03) 9651 3622

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH (03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE

Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
 Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
 Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
 Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA (03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT

The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <http://www.lookout.org.au>.

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732.**



DSM Procedure

Recording your Actions

Deutsche Schule Melbourne Inc, ABN 52 936 931 854



School staff should use this template to document an incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been or is at risk of being abused, including exposure to family violence. The template is to be used in conjunction with the Four Critical Actions for Schools. It is a requirement under Ministerial Order 870 for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes. Records are retained on the schools secured server.

If a child is in immediate danger, school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police.

The role of school staff is to document the disclosure, not to investigate abuse! You should use this template even if you decide not to report, to record your rationale for your decision and any follow up actions you take to support the child.

DEUTSCHE SCHULE MELBOURNE
Incident, Disclosure or Suspicion of Child Abuse Report
Reported by: Position: Relationship to Child:
ACTION 1 – RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY
Did the child require first aid? If 'yes' provide details: Who administered this? (Name and title): Did the child require further medical assistance? Current location and safety status: <small>(e.g. Are all impacted students safe and not in any immediate danger? Should a child be in immediate danger, report to Victoria Police on 000.</small>

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Child's Information

Name:

Gender:

Year Level:

Date of Birth:

Residential Address:

Parent/Guardians name/s:

Parent/Guardian contact:

Language(s) spoken by child:

Disabilities, mental or physical health issues:

Child's Background

Cultural Status or Religious Background:

Any known history of suspected abuse (including exposure to family violence) prior to this incident, disclosure of suspicion, or involvement with agencies:

Family Background

Family Composition (if known):

List parenting or care arrangements and siblings names and ages

Any other people living with the child (if known):

Disability, mental or physical health issues in family (if known):

Likely reaction to a report being made (if known):

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Details of the incident, disclosure or suspicion

Grounds for belief that a child has been abused, or is at risk of abuse:

(Indicators or instances which led you to believe a child/children are subject to child abuse, or at risk of abuse including exposure to violence)

Any physical indicators of abuse:

Any behavioural indicators of abuse:

Any patterns of behaviour or prior concerns leading up to an incident, disclosure or suspicion:

Details of person(s) alleged to have committed the abuse (if known):

Name:

Gender:

Date of Birth:

Relationship to Child:

Address:

Contact Details:

ACTION 2 – REPORT

Tick the authorities you have reported to:

- Victoria Police
- DHHS Child Protection
- Child FIRST
- Decision not to report

If you have decided not to report, list your reasons here. Also include any follow-up actions taken undertaken by you:

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Provide details of your discussions with any of the above authorities:

Date:

Time:

Authority:

Outcomes of the report:

Reporting internally

Provide details of your discussions with the Principal (or if the Principal is concerned the chairman):

Time:

Date:

Names:

Discussions of outcomes:

ACTION 3 – CONTACT PARENTS, CARERS or GUARDIANS

Provide detail of your discussion with parents, carers or guardians

Have you sought advice from DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police?

No

Yes

Is it appropriate to contact parent/carer/guardian?

No

Yes

List reasons if it is not appropriate to contact parent/carer/guardian:

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If contacting parent/carer/guardian, provide the following details:

Name of staff member making the call:

Name of parent/carer/guardian receiving the call:

Discussions of outcomes:

ACTION 4 – PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Planned Actions

(Provide detail of what follow-up actions have occurred to support the student)

Follow-up actions:

Support:

Referrals:

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REVIEW PROCESS (complete 4-6 weeks after)

Current safety and wellbeing of the child

Is the child safe from abuse and harm, including exposure to family violence?

- No
 Yes

If not consider the need to make a further report.

Does the child have any wellbeing issues that are not currently addressed?

- No
 Yes

If so, consider how these can be addressed and captured within a student support plan.

Current wellbeing of other children who may be impacted by the abuse

Are there any other children who may be impacted by the abuse?

- No
 Yes

If so have their wellbeing needs been met?

- No
 Yes

Current wellbeing of impacted staff members

Does the staff member who made the report/witnessed an incident, formed a suspicion or received a disclosure require any support?

- No
 Yes

If so has this been received?

- No
 Yes

Review of actions taken - Have school staff followed the four critical actions for schools?

Was an appropriate decision made in relation to when to act?

- No
 Yes

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Could the suspected abuse have been detected earlier?

- No
- Yes

ACTION 1:

Did the school take appropriate action in an emergency?

- No
- Yes

ACTION 2:

Was a report made to the appropriate authorities and internally?

- No
- Yes

Were subsequent reports made if necessary?

- No
- Yes

ACTION 3:

Did the school contact parents/carers/guardians asap?

- No
- Yes

Have the parents continued to be engaged if appropriate?

- No
- Yes

ACTION 4:

Has the school provided adequate support for students?

- No
- Yes

Has a student support plan been established, implemented and reviewed?

- No
- Yes

Has student support group been established?

- No
- Yes

Was the student appropriately supported in any interviews?

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No

Yes

Have any complaints been received?

No

Yes

Have the complaints been resolved?

No

Yes

Other Learnings:

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Created, August 2018

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DSM Internal Use

Version and Approval

Status:	Approved
Version / Date:	V1 / 24.08.2019
Approver:	Board / 31.08.2019
Owner:	Barbara Walsh
Next Review:	2 years after last publishing date
Classification:	Child Safety

Related Policies

Child Safe
Code of Conduct
Behaviour Management
Critical Incident Plan
Complaints and Grievances
On Site Supervision of Students
Professional Learning & Development
School Access
Staff Awareness
Supervision of Students Off-site
Student Welfare
Welfare Communication
Privacy