

Our Lady of the Pines Catholic Primary School's internal school process for mandatory reporting

Our Lady of the Pines Catholic Primary School staff play a critical role in protecting the students in their care.

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

An Our Lady of the Pines Catholic Primary School staff member must act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as he/she witnesses an incident, receives a disclosure or forms a reasonable belief * that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.

An Our Lady of the Pines Catholic Primary School staff member must act, if there is suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if unsure and has not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).

An Our Lady of the Pines Catholic Primary School staff member is strongly recommended to use the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if the decision is not to report.

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

ACTION 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.

ACTION 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.

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending.

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

1) WITHIN THE SCHOOL	2) WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY
<p>You must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.</p> <p>CATHOLIC SCHOOLS You must also report internally to: School principal and/or leadership team</p> <p>All allegations of 'reportable conduct' must be reported as soon as possible to: - Diocesan education office</p>	<p>You must report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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. <p>VICTORIA POLICE You must also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.</p> <p>CATHOLIC SCHOOLS You must also report internally to the School principal and/or leadership team and Diocesan education office</p>

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.

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENT/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.

ACTION 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.

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

This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

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.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION - East Division 1300 360 391
AFTER HOURS - 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

DIOCESAN OFFICE

Melbourne (03) 9267 0228

THE LOOKOUT

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.