



Child Safety Booklet

Child Safety Policy
Child Safety Code of Conduct
Reporting Procedure

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

1) Introduction

All Schools are required to implement the Child Safe Standards and the mandatory reporting guidelines from the Victorian Government's amendment to the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* ("CYFA"). Maranatha Christian School ("the School") is also committed to creating an organisational culture that fosters child safety and wellbeing as outlined by the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The school is committed to implementing the new Child Safe Standards, which commenced in Victoria on the 1st July 2022.

The School is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at the School is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

2) Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- outline the School's approach to child welfare;
- prevent child abuse occurring within all school environments;
- work towards an organisational culture of child safety;
- ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs;
- provide guidance on action that should be taken where a person suspects any child abuse within a school environment;
- provide a clear statement to staff, board directors, volunteers and contractors forbidding any such abuse; and
- provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

For the purposes of this Policy, "school environment" means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:

- a campus of the School;
- online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the Board for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services); and
- other locations provided by the School or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
 - camps;
 - approved homestay accommodation;
 - delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or
 - sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

3) Scope

This Policy applies to all staff, board directors, volunteers, contractors and students enrolled at the School.

4) Guiding principles

This Policy is based on the following principles:

- the School has zero tolerance for child abuse;
- the best interests of the child are paramount;
- child protection is a shared responsibility;
- all children have a right to feel safe and be safe at school, and have equal rights to protection from abuse;
- the School will consider the opinions of students and use their opinions to develop child protection policies and procedures;
- the School will take into account the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these matters;
- the School is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for students living with a disability; and
- everyone covered by this Policy must also comply with the School's Code of Conduct, which sets stringent standards for personal behaviour.

5) Definitions

Child abuse has the same meaning as it has in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005. Child abuse includes:

- a) any act committed against a child involving -
 - i. a sexual offence; or
 - ii. an offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958; and
- b) the infliction, on a child, of –
 - i. physical violence; or
 - ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- c) the serious neglect of a child.

“Child” means a person enrolled as a student at the School and under the age of 17 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. Collective term for “child” is “children”.

6) Child Protection Workers

Nominated Child Protection Workers are available to listen, discuss and clarify issues confronting individual teachers in relation to child physical and sexual abuse. The Child Protection Workers will make reports on behalf of the School and ensure that adequate records are maintained. The School's Child Protection Workers are our school Psychologist, Chaplain and Heads of Campus.

7) Reporting Obligations

The *CYFA* requires certain professionals to make a report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing when, in the course of their position or employment:

- they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse; and
- the child's parents or caregiver have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from harm.

At the School, mandatory reporters include the Principal/CEO, Deputy Principal, Head of Campus, registered teachers, School Psychologists and Chaplains employed by the School ("Mandatory Reporters").

Under the *CYFA*, mandatory reporters are required by law to notify the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, as soon as practicable after forming such a belief, and after each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

It is not mandatory to report emotional and psychological abuse or neglect, but you are at liberty to do so.

Reasonable Grounds for Belief

You have reasonable grounds to notify when:

- a child tells you that he/she has been physically or sexually abused;
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child is talking about themselves);
- someone else, such as a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child, tells you that a child has been abused;
- your observations of the child's behaviour or knowledge of children lead you to believe that the child has been abused; or
- you observe physical signs or indicators of abuse (e.g. bruises, cuts etc.).

Note: We encourage reporting where you hold a concern about the safety of a Child.

Voluntary Reporting

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, may disclose that information to the Police or the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. If a person would like internal guidance or support with addressing their concerns, they are encouraged to speak with the Child Protection Workers, Principal/CEO, Business Manager, Deputy Principal and/or Heads of Campus.

Obligation to Report Child Sexual Abuse

In addition to the obligations above, any person who receives information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (of or over the age of 18 years), has a legal obligation to disclose that information to the Police as soon as it is practicable.

Individuals who fail to comply with this obligation under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) could face up to three years' imprisonment.

During 2014, the Victorian Government amended the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) (*Crimes Act*) by establishing three new offences for the purpose of protecting children under 16 years of age from sexual abuse.

- Grooming Offence
- Failure to Protect Offence
- Failure to Disclose Offence

The School supports and encourages staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors to make a report to the Police or the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child.

Protection of Reporters

Any employee, board director, volunteer, contractor or student that makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations will be supported by the School, and will not be penalised by the School for making the report.

If an employee, board director, volunteer or contractor is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they must speak to the Child Protection Workers, Principal/CEO, Business Manager, Deputy Principal and/or Head of Campus for guidance and information.

Ultimately, it is a personal decision of the employee, director, volunteer or contractor whether they choose to make a report to an external authority or not.

8) Recruitment

The School undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors which aims to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children within all school environments;
- identify and recruit the safest and most suitable candidates who share the School's values and commitment to protect children; and
- prevent a person from working at the School if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.

Each job or category of jobs for school staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors that involves child-connected work will have a clear statement that sets out:

- the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and
- the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.

All applicants for jobs that involve child-connected work for the School will be informed about the School's child safety practices (including the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure).

All staff engaged by the School as classroom teachers must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, which includes Working with Children Checks ("WCC"). Teachers must provide evidence of such registration before they commence employment, and are informed of the School's Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure within their Letter of Appointment.

All non-teaching staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors engaged at the School are required to have a current WCC prior to being engaged by the School. The School Administration records all WCCs on a spreadsheet that is checked annually to see who requires a renewal.

The School will conduct thorough reference checks to ensure the suitability of all candidates prior to their engagement. This will include the School making reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:

- WCC status, or similar check;
- proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- the person's history of work involving children; and
- references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to the School will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for. However, the School will not offer any applicant a position at the School until they provide the required evidence to the Principal/CEO.

The School will exercise discretion and may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at the School and during their time with the School in regular intervals.

Once engaged, the School will provide staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors with access to the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure. Staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors must review and acknowledge their understanding of the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure.

The School will implement strategies to review the ongoing suitability of staff, board, volunteers and contractors working with children. This includes processes including Volunteer Induction, Staff Appraisal Processes, Police Background Checks, and appropriate professional learning and development.

9) Risk Management

The School will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

The School Board is committed to identifying and managing risks within all School environments. School Board members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

If the School Board identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more School environments the board will make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the School will take to reduce or remove the risks (i.e. risk controls).

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the School Board will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

The School will ensure that appropriate training at least annually is conducted for:

- School Board Members;
- Executive Team;
- Student Wellbeing Team;
- Staff;
- Contractors;
- Students; and
- Volunteers.

In relation to staff, the School will provide them with regular awareness on the protection of children, mandatory reporting and other associated obligations. The online mandatory reporting eLearning module is available for staff to complete, it is expected all staff will complete the eLearning module annually.

10) Communication

The School is pro-active in the area of prevention and will communicate the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure in the manner below. The Principal/CEO, through the appropriate stakeholders, is responsible for disseminating and communicating the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure in the manner below.

Students	Parents, Carers, Community	Employees, Volunteers, Contractors, School Board Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • School assemblies • Special sessions • Student Wellbeing Programs • Student Portal (SEQTA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of enrolment (Parents will receive an electronic copy) • Website • Parent information evenings • School newsletter • Parent Portal (SEQTA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Letters of appointment / contracts • New employees, directors, volunteers and contractors Induction Training and refresher training • Annual Training Session • Staff Portal (SEQTA)

11) Responding & Reporting

In the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust it is essential that it is dealt with sensitively and professionally. The School will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount, and will apply the School's Reporting Procedure.

Investigation

The School will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the School to conduct an investigation in addition to any investigation conducted by authorities (e.g. the police).

The Principal/CEO will conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing or the police, and will co-operate with the authorities as required.

If an allegation is made against an employee, Board Member, volunteer or contractor, the Principal/CEO will follow the reporting procedure and take all steps to ensure that safety of the child is paramount. During the investigation it may be necessary to withdraw the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down, reassignment to a role without direct contact with children, working under closer supervision during the investigation, working from home, or any other measures deemed appropriate depending on the seriousness of the allegation.

All people covered by the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct, and Reporting Procedure must co-operate fully with any investigation by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the police or the School.

The Principal/CEO will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other employees, Board members, volunteers and contractors may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements). An investigation conducted by the School will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of all the participants involved in the investigation. The School will also handle the allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the School to engage a person (or persons) from outside the School to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations.

The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may include withdrawal from active duty, re-assignment to duties with no contact with children, increased supervision, disciplinary action, dismissal or criminal prosecutions.

12) Support

It is essential that reports are managed in a caring, supportive and confidential manner. Support for the victim, and any staff member, Board member, volunteer and contractor affected by the inappropriate conduct, should be arranged as soon as possible.

Access to the School's Psychologists and Chaplains will be promoted and Heads of Campus shall monitor the wellbeing of the responding staff member and any other affected staff member, director, volunteer or contractor of the School.

13) Record keeping

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded in SEQTA with appropriate privacy settings. Places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm are what is recordable.

14) Privacy and Confidentiality

The School will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the Privacy Policy.

Principles

There are two guiding principles in respect to a child's privacy:

- First, the School will operate on the best interests principle. All employees, directors, volunteers and contractors will do what they believe to be in the best interest of the child. This principle supersedes all others.
- Second, the School will respect a child's confidentiality, except in situations where it conflicts with the best interests principle.

As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected. Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, employees, directors, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure and relevant statutory requirements.

15) Further Information

Further information concerning any aspect of Mandatory Reporting obligations may be directed to the School's Child Protection Workers.

Copies of *Responding to Child Abuse* - a booklet that has been developed to assist those professionals whose work brings them into contact with children and young people, is available via the Department of Human Services (children youth & families) website www.cyf.vic.gov.au. Other Child Protection Publications are also available via this link.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's *Student Safety section* also includes information on child protection and mandatory reporting.

16) Responsibilities

School Board

The School Board of Maranatha Christian School has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The School Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Safety Code of Conduct are in place.

Principal/CEO

The Principal/CEO of Maranatha Christian School is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, School policies and procedures, and the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the Maranatha Christian School community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

Head of Campus

All Heads of Campus must ensure that they:

- Promote child safety at all times;
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- Educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activity.

The Executive Team should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

Child Safety Officers

The primary purpose of the position is to manage the implementation of the Child Safety Policy, especially in relation to training and educating staff and students and to manage any incidents of reporting to ensure Maranatha Christian School is compliant with all legislation around such reporting. The Child Safety Officers may be supported by a member of the Executive Team in training and educating staff.

The Child Safety Officers are a contact person for children, young people, parents, employees and volunteers to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people within our School.

The role requires the officers to take action when child protection concerns are reported, including the provision of support to those within the community who have been affected, with an understanding and respect for cultural diversity.

Maranatha Christian School has appointed Mrs Ruth Waterworth (School Psychologist), Mr Liam Beasy (Chaplain), Mrs Colleen Dutlow (Head of Campus) and Mrs Jenny Rus (Head of Campus) as the School's Child Safety Officers.

Child Protection Workers

The Child Protection Workers have the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or students in relation to Child Safety. The Child Protection Workers at Maranatha Christian School will always work concurrently with other School leaders.

The School's Child Protection Workers are Mrs Ruth Waterworth (School Psychologist), Mr Liam Beasy (Chaplain), Mrs Colleen Dutlow (Head of Campus) and Mrs Jenny Rus (Head of Campus).

All Staff / Volunteers / Contractors

All staff / volunteers / contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, Maranatha Christian School's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state- based child protection service) and fulfill their obligations as mandatory reporters;
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person at the School); and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

17) Information Sharing Schemes

The Victorian government is progressing three interrelated reforms that are integral to reducing family violence and promoting child wellbeing or safety.

The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVIS), the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) have been developed in response to several coronial inquests and independent inquiries.

The Family Violence and Child Information Sharing Schemes came into effect in September 2018 and

are aimed at removing barriers to information sharing to allow professionals to work together, across the service system, to make more informed decisions and better respond to the needs of children, families and other people, including those experiencing family violence.

The two information sharing schemes allow prescribed organisations and services to share information in addition to existing information sharing permissions available to them.

MARAM will guide information sharing under both information sharing schemes wherever family violence is present.

Together, these reforms create a more collaborative, integrated system that will help improve safety and wellbeing outcomes for all Victorian children and families, including victims of family violence.

From Term 2 2021, the CISS will apply to all Victorian schools and early childhood education and care services. Maranatha Christian School falls under the requirements and obligations under the schemes and the sharing of information is guided by appropriate frameworks. Schools can share confidential information which meets all of the threshold requirements.

For additional information about the information sharing schemes, please refer to:

- Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS): <https://www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme>
- Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVIS): <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme>
- Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM):
- <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management>

Requests for information from prescribed Information Sharing Entities related to the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) should be made in writing to rwaterworth@maranatha.vic.edu.au where practicable.

18) Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the School's two-year review cycle. Following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the School's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the School's care.

19) Legislation

Prescriptive legal and regulatory requirements include:

- Ministerial Order No. 1359
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Working with Children Act 2005
- Family Violence Protection Act 2008
- Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001

Grooming Offence

The *Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014* (Vic) amended the Crimes Act from 1 July 2014 by inserting the following section:

- s.49B – Grooming for sexual conduct with child under the age of 16 years

Under s.49B(2), the criminal offence is as follows:

“A person of or over the age of 18 years must not communicate, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or a person under whose care, supervision or authority the child is (whether or not a response is made to the communication), with the intention of facilitating the child’s engagement in or involvement in a sexual offence with that person or another person who is of or over the age of 18 years”.

This offence carries a penalty of imprisonment for up to 10 years.

The Head of Campus will ensure that Senior School students who are 18 years of age or over, will be made fully aware of the Grooming Offence.

For further information, refer to <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new> Betrayal of Trust Factsheet: The new “Grooming” Offence produced by the Department of Justice.

Failure to Protect Offence

The *Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014* (Vic) amended the Crimes Act from 27 October 2014 by inserting:

- s.49C Failure by person in authority to protect child from sexual offence.

This section was intended to be operative from 1 July 2015 but, on 7 October 2014, the Victorian Government announced its commencement from 27 October 2014.

Under s.49C, it is now a criminal offence for a person who:

“(a) by reason of the position he or she occupies within a relevant organisation, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a relevant child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by a person of or over the age of 18 years who is associated with the relevant organisation; and

(b) knows that there is a substantial risk that the person will commit a sexual offence against a relevant child - must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk”.

This offence carries a penalty of imprisonment for up to 5 years.

As soon as any person in authority within Maranatha Christian School becomes aware of a risk of child sexual abuse, the person will be under a duty to take steps to remove or reduce that risk.

For further information, refer to <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new> Betrayal of Trust Factsheet: The new ‘failure to protect’ Offence produced by the Department of Justice.

Failure to Disclose Offence

The *Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014* (Vic) amended the Crimes Act from 27 October 2014 by inserting:

- s.327 Failure to disclose sexual offence committed against a child under the age of 16 years
- s.328 Protection of those who disclose under section 327
- s.329 Evidence and legal proceedings
- s.330 Confidentiality.

Reporting child sexual abuse is regarded as a community-wide responsibility. Section 327 of the Crimes Act imposes a clear legal duty upon all adults to report information about child sexual abuse to police.

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence, with a penalty of imprisonment for up to three years.

This obligation is different to mandatory reporting obligations under child protection laws and applies to all adults, not just the professionals currently subject to mandatory reporting (i.e. registered teachers, principals and nurses).

For further information, refer to <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new> Betrayal of Trust Factsheet: The new 'failure to disclose' Offence produced by the Department of Justice.

19) Training

All school staff will undergo mandatory training at least once a year. This may involve sessions taken by the Principal/CEO and other school leaders.

Content covered includes:

- Mandatory Reporting
- Types of abuse
- Reasonable Grounds
- Who to Inform?
- Potential Risks
- Risk management strategies
- Child Safe Standards
- Failure to Protect
- Concurrent Duty of Care
- Grooming
- Statement of Commitment
- MCS Code of Conduct
- On-line training

All staff complete online training provided by the Department of Education and training. This may be accessed at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/online-learning-for-schools.aspx>

Staff will also be familiar with the Child Protection Protocol which may be accessed at : <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx>

20) Empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Maranatha we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging. This is assisted by special programs and our student code (The MCS Way).

Maranatha informs students of their rights and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.

Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns on our student and parent portal.

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Maranatha we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

Examples include:

- all of our child safety policies and procedures are available on our website
- the parent, student and portal contains polices, procedures and helpful material
- letters will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety
- student, staff and parent meetings
- child safety posters are displayed across the school

21) Additional Support

Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection - South Division Intake: Telephone: 1300 655 795.

Child Protection Crisis Line – 24 Hours, seven days a week. Telephone: 13 12 78.

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

1) Introduction

Staff, Board Members, volunteers and contractors at the School are required to abide by this Code.

The purpose of this Code is to promote child safety within all School Environments.

The following list of behaviours includes examples of what is acceptable and not acceptable behaviour.

2) Acceptable Behaviours

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of, or in connection with, the School must:

- a) contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone '000');
- b) adhere to the Child Safety Policy and Procedure and uphold the School's statement of commitment to child safety at all times;
- c) take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse;
- d) conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as a staff member, director, volunteer or contractor of the School and as a positive role model to children and young people;
- e) work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation;
- f) be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area;
- g) maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities;
- h) establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- i) be fair, considerate and honest with others;
- j) treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas, opinions and backgrounds;
- k) promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island child's self-identification);
- l) promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
- m) promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability;
- n) listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they are or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
- o) ensure (as far as practicable) that adults are not alone with a child;
- p) comply with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)*;
- q) raise concerns about suspected abuse with the School Psychologist, Chaplains, Head of Campus or Principal/CEO as soon as possible;
- r) record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of abuse, discrimination or harassment;
- s) if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe;
- t) be professional in their actions;
- u) maintain strict impartiality;
- v) comply with the School's guidelines on contact with children, including via social electronic media;
- w) respect confidentiality when sharing information about children in accordance with the Child Safety Policy and Procedure and your reporting obligations;
- x) maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people; and
- y) operate within the policies and guidelines of the School.

3) Unacceptable Behaviours

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of the School must not:

- a) ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- b) put a child at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors for an improper reason);
- c) speak to a child in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Some examples are:
 - swearing or using inappropriate language in the presence of a child;
 - yelling at a child, except in an emergency situation where the child's safety may be in danger;
 - use of hurtful sarcasm.
- d) discuss sexual activities with a child unless it is a specific job requirement and the person is trained to discuss these matters, or the child is a member of your family;
- e) have contact with a student outside of the School without the consent of their parent or carer and, if the contact involves after hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching of a student (other than a member of your family), with the prior consent of the School.
- f) have any online contact with a child or their family outside of necessary contact, e.g. by providing e-newsletters, assisting students with their school work, on SEQTA; Accidental/incidental contact, such as:
 - attending a friend's BBQ in which students are attending;
 - attending church and/or church activities in which students are attending; and
 - any other incidental contact that is outside of your professional relationship with the child and that is not for an improper purpose, is appropriate;
- g) use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account to communicate with a child (unless the child is a member of your family);
- h) exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child (unless the child is a member of your family);
- i) use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while in the presence of or while supervising a child (unless the child is a member of your family or your contact with the child is accidental/incidental and you are not performing your professional obligations);
- j) use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs while in the presence of or while supervising a child;
- k) provide or allow a child to consume alcohol or illegal drugs
- l) initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves
- m) engage in rough physical games;
- n) hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate and or/culturally insensitive way
- o) engage in any sexual contact with a child. For the purposes of this Code, sexual contact is defined as vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral intercourse or the touching of an erogenous zone of another (including but not limited to the thighs, genitals, buttocks, pubic region or chest) for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying either person;
- p) take a child to their home or encourage meetings outside program activities (unless the child is a member of your family or written parental permission has been provided);
- q) be naked in the presence of a child (unless the child is a member of your family);
- r) possess sexually explicit printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children;
- s) sleep in the same beds, sleeping bags, rooms or tents with a child (unless the child is a member of your family);
- t) discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender identity, sex, race, culture, sexuality, or disability;
- u) engage in any activity with a child that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
- v) be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than a very short time
- w) develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child for their own needs
- x) show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- y) photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
- z) do anything in contravention of the School's policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

4) Physical Contact / Touching

Staff members, Board members, volunteers, and contractors are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behaviour management of children. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviours by children.

Physical contact may be required in an emergency situation to remove children quickly from danger or threat of danger.

Appropriate contact between staff members, Board members, volunteers, contractors, and children is part of normal human relationships. Some considerations and guidelines include the following:

- a) consider the child's age, developmental level, maturity and level of care required, for example, touching a child to gain their attention, guiding or comforting a distressed child;
- b) work in an open environment; for example, in confidential interviews or a one-to-one meeting, the door should be open with visual access. Exceptions apply for professions with strict confidentiality requirements;
- c) be alert to cues from children about how comfortable they are in your proximity and respect their need for personal space;
- d) be sensitive when interacting with children who may misinterpret your actions, such as those who may have been traumatised by abuse or adolescents seeking attention from a member of the opposite sex;
- e) be aware of cultural norms that may influence the interpretation of your behaviour;
- f) be cautious about physical contact in games or practical instruction. If you need to make physical contact for demonstrations, explain the activity and what you will do, maintain a safe and appropriate distance;
- g) physical contact should be made in a way that makes children feel comfortable, for example, shaking hands, a congratulatory pat on the back or rub on the side of their arm for reassurance. Massaging a child or allowing a child to massage you is inappropriate physical contact (unless the child is a member of your family and you comply with all relevant legislation).

Physical contact with a child should be avoided where possible.

5) Transportation and off-site events

Other than in an emergency or other abnormal situation where no other option could be reasonably foreseen, it is not acceptable to transport children without written permission of their parent, carer or guardian.

It is prohibited to have unnecessary and/or inappropriate physical contact with children while in vehicles.

Children should be transported directly to their destination. No stops should be made other than those that are reasonably scheduled for meals or comfort stops. This obligation does not apply to children that are a member of your family.

It is prohibited to have children spend the night at the residence of a staff member, Board member, volunteer or contractor without parental/guardian prior approval.

Changing and showering facilities or arrangements for adults must be separate from facilities or arrangements for children (unless the child is a member of your family).

6) Pastoral Care

Subject to the above restraints, pastoral care of students at the School takes place within the context of relationships. The School values each person, without discrimination, and seeks to provide an environment of acceptance, encouragement, challenge, safety and care.

Teachers seek to develop strong relationships with students and their families, in order to provide emotional support and spiritual care. This is enabled in the classroom, in homeroom groups and during extra-curricular activities, such as whole school activities, camps, excursions, sporting events and information/parent evenings.

Teachers, acting in support of parents, seek to discipline students towards genuine Christ-like behaviour, modelling and encouraging mutual respect, integrity and accountability.

Students are given clear guidelines regarding behaviour and are expected to contribute towards a positive learning and social community. Guidance, correction and restoration are a part of pastoral care, and contribute to the development of community and good citizenship. In the terminology of Christian community, students are encouraged to become followers of Christ in His life and teaching.

Middle and Secondary Students

Secondary students are grouped in year levels or sections and participate in Home Group classes where teachers and students share devotions, reflective of the School's Biblical Christian Worldview and core values, inclusive of life stories, anecdotes and strategies, in order to encourage further development of students' sense of value, reiterating the importance of being a part of the community. Home Group teachers mark rolls and check for uniform compliance. Students also participate in specific skill and strategy development for social and emotional learning through.

Junior Students

Primary students meet with their classroom teachers during the first session of the day to mark rolls, for devotions and for both personal and group connections. Students also participate in specific skill and strategy development for social and emotional learning.

All homeroom and classroom teachers may refer students to the School's Head of Sections, School Psychologist and Chaplains for additional pastoral care. The school newsletter is sent home once a term to keep families in touch with upcoming events and where outstanding achievements can be noted and celebrated.

In both the Primary and Secondary schools, classroom teachers are available for communication with parents in order to support the student and to build strong connections between home and the school. At times where students or parents are not happy with the pastoral support pathways for student complaints or grievances are outlined in the Grievance Policy.

7) Confidentiality

Disclosing information to staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors

When children are having a written or verbal interaction with staff, Board members, volunteers and/or contractors of the School, that interaction is confidential to the organisation not to the individual. This means that a staff member, Board member, volunteer or contractor is able to talk to the Head of Campus in a way that identifies the child. The guiding principle is, that where possible, the privacy of the child should be respected at all times. When considering breaching their privacy who and how many people are told should be based on what is believed to be in the best interests of the child.

Disclosing information to people external to the organisation

Staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors should not discuss confidential matters about children with people outside the organisation in a way that identifies that child except when they have the express permission of the child or it complies with the School's Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure. In circumstances where staff, Board members, volunteers and/or contractors believe that there is not enough knowledge within the organisation to provide the best possible assistance to a child, they are able to seek expertise external to the School. When communicating with people outside the School the child's identity should be protected.

Informing children

It is the responsibility of the School to communicate the limits of confidentiality in the School to children who are likely to have an ongoing relationship with the School.

8) IT Code of Conduct

All teachers are also required to follow the Victorian Institute of Teaching's ("VIT") Code of Conduct.

For example:

Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment:

- work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect for everyone;
- model and engage in respectful and impartial language and behaviour;
- protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm.
- consider the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners

9) Cultural Safety

Maranatha Christian School is committed to providing culturally safe environments in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children, young people and students are respected and valued.

The School is committed to ensuring that racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated, and any instances of racism within the School are addressed with appropriate consequences.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

1) Introduction

This Procedure applies to all employees, Board members, volunteers and contractors of the School, whether they work face-to-face, online or remotely with children. It should be read in accordance with the Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct.

Principals, teachers, early childhood workers, psychologists, counsellors and chaplains, all of whom are commonly found employed in a school setting, are mandated by the State to report suspected child abuse. Staff are required to report suspected abuse where they have reasonable grounds to suspect abuse.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

2) Reasonable Grounds

"Reasonable Grounds" are defined as when:

- A child tells you she/he has been abused.
- Someone else tells you.
- A child tells you she/he knows someone has been abused (often a child is referring to her/himself).
- Your own observation of a particular child's behaviour, or your knowledge of children generally leads you to suspect child abuse.
- An adult victim discloses past abuse and a child is in the care of the perpetrator.
- Other circumstances lead you to suspect that a child has been abused.
- The law does not require proof in order that a report is made.
- The law does require that you report suspected child abuse.

3) Preparing to make a notification

- If you suspect child abuse, document all information accurately into SEQTA. This includes all communication with the student, all staff and child protection.
- If possible, talk to the child in a non-threatening way and without asking directing questions. When documenting information, include direct quotes from the child and/or parents and other family members using quotation marks. This can be done by the teacher who is concerned, a teacher the student feels comfortable with or the school counselling staff.
- If possible, consult with the Head of Campus / Principal / School Child Safety Officer, to clarify your observations and assessment, and to gain collegial support.
- Do not inform the family of the report being made to Child Protection.
- If you form the belief that a child may be subject to abuse, contact Child protection for the region the student resides within. Most Maranatha families reside in the Southern Division, but not all.

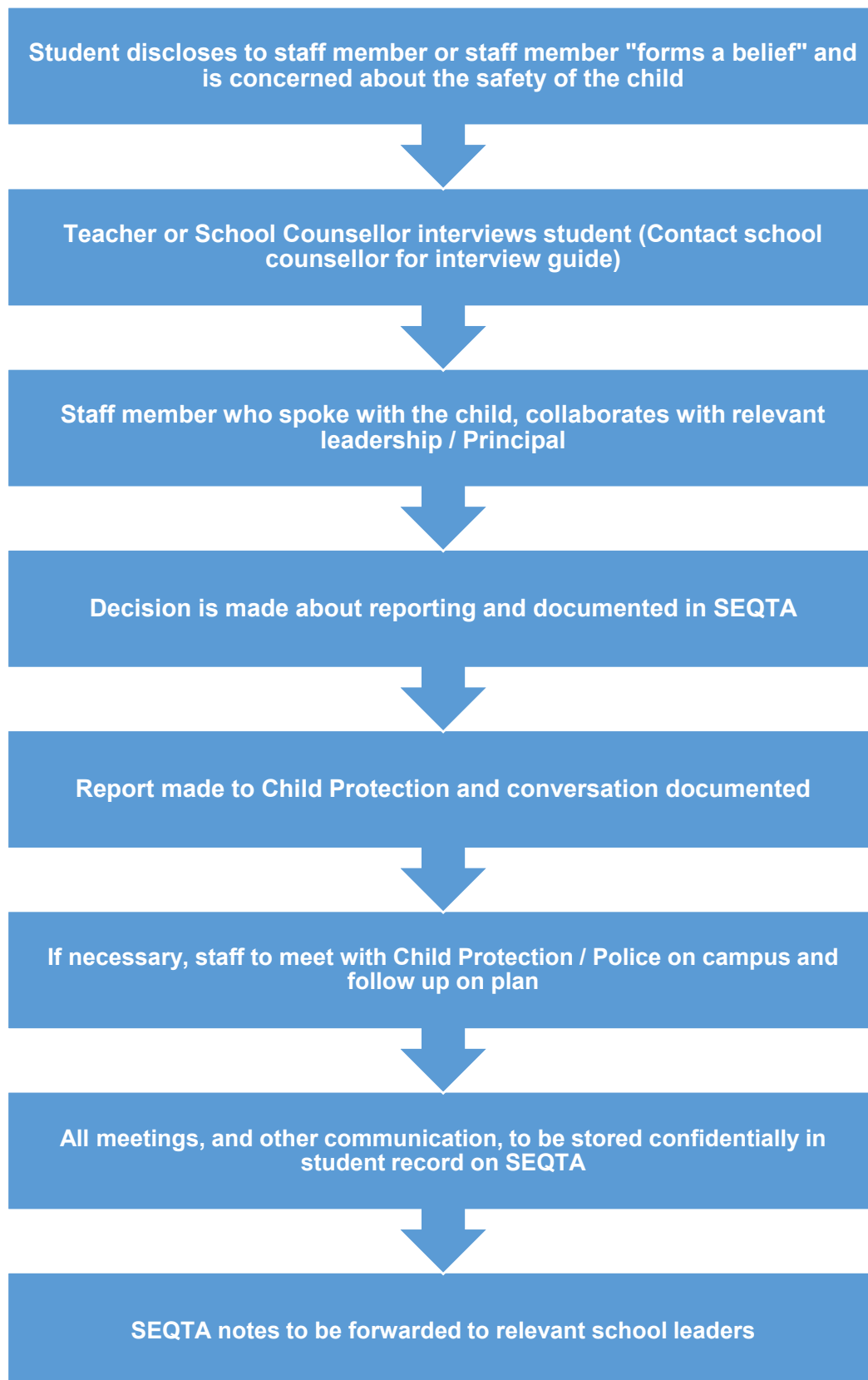
South Division Intake - 1300 655 795

South Division has one child protection intake located at DFFH Dandenong. It covers local government areas such as: Bayside, Cardinia, Casey, Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Latrobe, Mornington Peninsula, Port Phillip and Stonnington.

East Division Intake - 1300 360 391

East Division has one child protection intake located at DFFH Box Hill. It covers local government areas such as: Boroondara, Manningham, Maroondah, Mitchell, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges.

4) Flow Chart for Mandatory Reporting to Authorities



5) Following a Notification

- The staff member making the report will be offered debriefing with leadership, staff chaplain and/or school counsellor.
- Collaboration between the School and Protective Services is important to making informed decisions.
- Any new information which is disclosed to staff while the case is active, should be reported to child protection, as should further concerns after the case is closed.
- Staff are to make appropriate notes on SEQTA as the case progresses.

6) Reporting Table

Who	Details
<u>Mandated staff:</u> -Principals -Primary & secondary teachers -Early childhood workers -School Psychologist -School Counsellors -School Chaplains	<u>Must:</u> Report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
<u>Non-mandated school staff,</u> including volunteers (section 183, CYFA 2005)	Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection may make a protective report regarding their concerns to DFFH Child Protection. School staff who form a belief on reasonable grounds should inform the principal of any concerns.
<u>All school staff:</u> Forming a belief on reasonable grounds	A belief is formed when a person has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more than a suspicion - is more likely to believe rather than disbelieve that a student is at risk. <p><i><u>Note:</u> If a staff member has unresolved suspicions that do not lead them to form a belief they should initially consult with the principal, a member of the school's leadership team or DFFH Child Protection. A referral to CHILD First / Orange Door may also be appropriate to engage support for the family.</i></p> Reasonable grounds are established when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a child or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused - a child or young person states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves) - someone who knows the child or young person states that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused. - a child shows signs of being physically or sexually abused

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the staff member is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child and young person's safety, stability or development - the staff member observes signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision - a child's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.
<p>School staff seeking consultation</p>	<p>Consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -school leadership or specialist staff (psychologist/counsellor) -DFFH Child Protection -Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637-2934 or (03) 9637-2487. <p>Additionally, CHILD First / Orange Door and Child Protection can consult Victorian teachers, principals and other mandated staff when they are deciding how best to respond to a referral or a report they have received. The legislation allows you to share relevant information with family services about a vulnerable child without needing to be concerned about legal or professional consequences, provided you do so in good faith. However, any information you provide should be directly related to your concerns about the child and not based on second-hand information.</p>
<p>Teacher & Principal and other mandated staff actions</p>	<p>Mandated staff should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - only gather enough information to form the belief - use open ended questions when talking to the student. <p>Mandated staff should not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conduct their own investigation - ask leading questions that suggest the abuse took place - interview witnesses - take statements - collect evidence - conduct a physical examination. <p><i>Note: School staff should keep comprehensive, chronologically ordered notes that describe the source of their concerns, e.g. from obvious injuries, behaviours or comments made outlining related events, actions taken and further considerations determine the need for help. Notes should also reflect who the staff member has been in contact with.</i></p>
<p>Information required when making a report to Child Protection</p>	<p>The following information is required to make the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - name of family and children - addresses, language spoken and student's date of birth - factual and specific reason for concern - the reporter's involvement with the family - any other people or agencies involved - concerns about a child protection workers safety in visiting the family - best time to find the parents/guardians at home - if the family knows the report is being made.

	<p><i>Note: An inability to provide all of this information should not delay the making of the report. Further information can be provided after the initial report is made.</i></p>
Professional Protection for Reporters	<p>Teachers, principals and mandated staff making mandatory reports are protected against legal, professional and civil actions by the CYFA as long as they are acting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in good faith - for the best interests of the child <p>They cannot be held to have acted unprofessionally.</p>
Confidentiality of identity	<p>Information about the identity of a person making a report to Child Protection must be kept confidential unless the reported consents to it being disclosed.</p>
Reports involving international students	<p>Where any report to the DFFH, Child Protection involves an international student, the principal must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •advise the Departments International Division on (03) 9637-2990 •consult with the Division to ensure support is arranged.
Reports involving Koorie students	<p>Where any report to the DFFH, Child Protection involves a Koorie student, the principal must advise the regional office. The regional office, with the regional Koorie support officer, ensures support is arranged.</p>
Information Sharing	<p>Teachers, principals and other mandated staff making reports or providing information to Child Protection, CHILD First / Orange Door and Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT) are specifically protected against legal, professional and civil actions by the CYFA provided they are “acting in good faith” in the interests of the child.</p> <p>School staff are allowed to share information with Child Protection that may help them to make an initial assessment about a child. Any information that is relevant to the protection or development of a child when Child Protection is investigating a report, or during subsequent child protection intervention is allowed to be shared.</p>
Referral to CHILD First / Orange Door	<p>A referral to CHILD First / Orange Door is the best way of connecting children, young people and their families to the services they need. School staff should make a referral to CHILD First / Orange Door where school staff have concerns about a child’s wellbeing but do not believe the child is in need of protection.</p>

7) Investigation Table

This table describes the responsibilities during an investigation.

Who	Responsibility
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Child Protection	Determine if the circumstances: - warrant an investigation - should be referred to CHILD First / Orange Door.
Police	Investigate the circumstances. May ask teachers or principal for a statement relating to: - mandatory reports - allegations of student sexual assault.
School Organisation	- Investigation of an employee or volunteer relating to child and/or sexual abuse allegations to result in immediate suspension of employee or volunteer with termination of employment or involvement if found guilty. - Incidents of sexual abuse allegation against employee or volunteers to be notified to insurance broker within 24 hrs.