



# CHILD SAFETY PROCEDURES

## Our Lady's Primary School

### PROTECT Responding & Reporting Obligations

July 2022

Our Lady's Primary School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Bishop of Sandhurst and is owned, operated and governed by Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CES Ltd).

#### 1. Purpose

This document outlines four critical actions which must be taken when responding to an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse as described in the joint protocol *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

This procedure is informed by the Our Lady's Primary School Child Safety Policy PROTECT Responding & Reporting Obligations.

#### 2. Required actions under this procedure

Our Lady's Primary School will display the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse* diagram in staffrooms and other strategic areas of the school, including online, to ensure all school staff are aware of the actions to take as soon as they witness a child abuse incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable suspicion or belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused.

##### 2.1 Responding to and reporting child abuse concerns

Our Lady's Primary School staff when responding to and reporting child abuse concerns will follow the joint protocol *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

All staff members must take any complaint or concern relating to child abuse seriously. They must act, and follow the Four Critical Actions, as soon as they become aware of a child abuse incident – that is, when a child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse. The staff member must ensure that they act promptly and thoroughly in their response.

##### 2.2 Becoming aware of a child abuse incident

There are four main ways in which a school staff member may become aware that a child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse:

###### 2.2.1 Witnessing an incident

If you witness an incident where you believe a child has been subjected to, or may be at risk of, abuse, including exposure to family violence, you must first take immediate action to protect the safety of the child or children involved and then refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

### 2.2.2 Forming a suspicion or reasonable belief

All suspicions that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being abused must be taken seriously, including suspicions that the abuse is taking or may take place outside school grounds or areas. If your suspicion develops into a reasonable belief, you must act and refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

### 2.2.3 Receiving a disclosure about or from a current student

All disclosures must be treated seriously. You should immediately refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

### 2.2.4 Receiving a disclosure about or from a former student

If you receive a disclosure from a former student about historical abuse, you must act. If the former student is currently of school age and attending a Victorian school, you must immediately refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

If the former student is no longer of school age or attending a Victorian school, you must still report the disclosure to [DFFH Child Protection](#).

## 2.3 Notes and records

Our Lady's Primary School staff are to keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse using *Protect: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools*.

Even if a staff member decides not to make a report, they must still accurately document their notes relating to the incident, disclosure or allegation of child abuse using *Protect: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools*.

Notes and records must be kept securely on school grounds and must not be destroyed as they may be needed at a later time.

## 2.4 Disclosures

It is the role of Our Lady's Primary School staff members to reassure and support a child or young person who makes a disclosure of abuse. However, school staff members should never promise to keep any disclosures confidential as all disclosures of abuse must be reported.

The role of Our Lady's Primary School staff remains the same if disclosures are made by

a parent/carer or a sibling, or if disclosures involve family violence.

For strategies on how to manage a disclosure, refer to *Protect: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools*.

## 2.5 The Four Critical Actions

There are *Four Critical Actions* which must be taken when responding to and reporting a child protection incident, disclosure or suspicion.

1. *Responding to an Emergency*
2. *Reporting to Authorities*
3. *Contacting Parents/Carers*
4. *Providing On-going support.*

### 2.5.1 Critical Action 1: Responding to an Emergency

This first step is only applicable if a child has just been abused or is at risk of immediate harm. If this is not the case, go straight to Critical Action 2: Reporting to Authorities.

If the child has just been abused or is at risk of immediate harm, you must take reasonable steps to protect the child, including:

- separating the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring that if the parties involved are all present at the school, they are supervised separately by a school staff member
- arranging and providing urgent medical assistance where necessary, including administering first aid or calling 000 for an ambulance
- 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.

If the child protection incident has occurred at a school, school staff should also ensure that reasonable steps are taken to preserve the environment, the clothing and other items and to prevent any potential witnesses (including school staff members, volunteers and contractors) from discussing the incident until Victoria Police or relevant authorities arrive on the premises.

### 2.5.2 Critical Action 2: Reporting to Authorities

All forms and instances of suspected or alleged child abuse must be reported to the appropriate authority.

Once immediate health and safety concerns have been addressed, the staff member must take steps to report the incident, suspicion or disclosure of child

abuse as soon as practicable. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence (refer to failure to disclose).

There are different reporting procedures depending on:

- whether the source of the suspected or alleged abuse comes from within the school or within the family or community of the child
- the type of abuse.

In all cases, staff members must report internally to the Principal or, if the Principal is involved in the allegation, the Leadership Team.

Additionally:

- where the source of the abuse comes from within the school, that is, the suspected or alleged abuse involves a school staff member, volunteer, allied health professional, officer/office holder, contractor or visitor at the school, it must be reported to Victoria Police
- where the suspicion, belief or disclosure relates to sexual abuse or grooming, it must be reported to Victoria Police
- where the source of the abuse comes from within the family or community and is not sexual abuse or grooming, it must be reported to DFFH Child Protection.

DFFH and DET have deliberately set a low threshold for the formation of a 'reasonable belief'. For more information, refer to the **reasonable belief** section of the Our Lady's Primary School Child Safety Policy – PROTECT Responding & Reporting Obligations.

*Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse* requires all staff to report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of abuse as soon as possible to the relevant authorities.

### **How to make a Mandatory Reporting**

The table below describes the information to include when making a **mandatory report** about child abuse or child abuse concerns. If a child is at immediate risk of harm, contact Victoria Police immediately.

## Making a Mandatory Report

Step	Description
<p><b>1. Keep notes</b></p>	<p>Keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a description of the concerns (e.g., physical injuries, student behaviour)</li> <li>• the source of those concerns (e.g., observation, report from child or another person)</li> <li>• the actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g., consultation with the principal, report to DFFH Child Protection)</li> </ul> <p>Staff <b>must</b> use the template provided in <u><i>PROTECT: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools</i></u> to record their notes.</p>
<p><b>2. Discuss concerns</b></p>	<p>Due to the complexity of child abuse incidents, disclosures and suspicions, it is recommended that concerns and observations regarding suspected physical or sexual abuse of a child are discussed with the Principal/Child Safety Officer/Leadership Team and a member of the CES Ltd Student Pastoral Wellbeing Team.</p> <p>This is not a legal requirement; however, it will help to ensure support is provided to all involved in matters of this nature. The confidentiality of these discussions must be maintained.</p> <p>You should then make your own assessment about whether you are required to make a report about the child or young person and to whom the report should be made.</p> <p>It is important to remember that the duty to report abuse or suspicions of abuse exists even if the Principal/Child Safety Officer/Leadership Team and a member of the CES Ltd Student Pastoral Wellbeing Team advises you not to proceed with reporting suspected abuse.</p>
<p><b>3. Gather and document information</b></p>	<p>Gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• full name, date of birth and residential address of the child or young person</li> <li>• details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns</li> <li>• your involvement with the child or young person</li> <li>• details of any other agencies which may be involved with the child or young person.</li> </ul> <p>This information should be collected and documented using <u><i>PROTECT: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools</i></u>. The template is to be used to record as much information as possible to provide when you make your report to either Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection.</p>

Making a Mandatory Report	
Step	Description
	It is critical that completing the template does not impact on reporting times – if a child is in immediate danger, staff need to report the matter to Victoria Police immediately.
<b>4. Make the report</b>	<p><b>To report concerns which are life-threatening, phone 000 or the local police station.</b></p> <p>Where the source of the abuse comes from within <b>the school</b> that is, the suspected or alleged abuse involves a school staff member, volunteer, allied health practitioner, officer/office holder, contractor or visitor at the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– contact Victoria Police, which will contact DFFH Child Protection when appropriate</li> <li>– report internally to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the Principal, or the Leadership Team if the Principal is involved in the allegation</li> <li>– CES Ltd Safeguarding Team</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Where the source of the suspected or alleged abuse comes from within the child’s family or community, you must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– report sexual abuse and grooming to Victoria Police</li> <li>– report the matter to <u>DFFH Child Protection</u> if you consider the child to be in need of protection due to child abuse, or that they have been, are being or are at risk of being harmed due to any form of abuse, including family violence. If after hours, call the Child Protection Emergency Service on 13 12 78</li> <li>– report internally to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the Principal, or a member of the Leadership Team if the Principal is unavailable</li> <li>○ CES Ltd Safeguarding Team</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>5. Document written records of report</b>	<p>Make a written record of the report, including the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the date and time of the report, and a summary of what was reported</li> <li>• the name and position of the person who made the report, and the person who received the report.</li> </ul> <p>The information initially recorded in <u><i>PROTECT: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools</i></u> and any additional information provided to either Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection are to be stored securely and maintained indefinitely by the school to ensure that records are accessible upon request by external authorities investigating the matter.</p>

## Making a Mandatory Report

Step	Description
6. Additional steps for overseas students	Where a child abuse incident, disclosure or suspicion involves an international student at the school and the school has issued a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter for that student (thereby assuming responsibility for the child's accommodation, support and general welfare), the school will also need to contact the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

### Reporting that is non-mandatory

All Our Lady's Primary School Staff, volunteers, contractors, other service providers who are not mandatory reporters have professional and moral (and sometimes legal) obligations to report a child protection incident, disclosure or suspicion.

Please refer to *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse* in relation to reporting a child protection incident, disclosure or suspicion that is not the subject of a mandatory reporting obligation.

### How to report allegations of reportable conduct

The table below describes the information to include when making an allegation of reportable conduct about an employee (persons engaged by the entity such as volunteers, contractors, office holders, board members, board committee members, school advisory council members and officers of a religious body) at the school. The Reportable Conduct Scheme is in addition to a staff member's mandatory reporting or criminal reporting obligations. Reference should also be made to the Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy if an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

Any allegations of criminal conduct, including physical violence, significant emotional or psychological abuse, sexual offences and significant neglect must be reported to Victoria Police as the priority. However, school staff members may find they also need to make an allegation of reportable conduct for the same incident.

For further support and advice regarding reporting conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, contact the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team on 03 5443 2377 or [rsc@ceosand.catholic.edu.au](mailto:rsc@ceosand.catholic.edu.au).

Making an Allegation of Reportable Conduct	
Step	Description
1. Keep notes	<p>Keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a description of the concerns (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)</li> <li>• the source of those concerns (e.g. observation, report from child or another person)</li> <li>• any actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with the Principal, report to DFFH Child Protection).</li> </ul>
2. Make the report	<p>As soon as a person forms a reasonable belief that an employee (persons engaged by the entity such as volunteers, contractors, office holders, board members, board committee members, school advisory council members and officers of a religious body) at the school has engaged in reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, you must report this allegation to the school's Principal or, if the Principal is involved in the allegation, a member of the Leadership Team, the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team or the Chief Executive Officer on 03 5443 2377 or <a href="mailto:rsc@ceosand.catholic.edu.au">rsc@ceosand.catholic.edu.au</a>.</p>

### What should the principal of do about a reportable allegation?

Below are the steps that the principal must take if there is a potential reportable allegation. These steps are in general order of priority, but the guidance may change depending on the circumstances. In all cases, reportable allegations must be referred to CES Ltd Safeguarding Team as soon as practicable on 03 5443 2377 or [rsc@ceosand.catholic.edu.au](mailto:rsc@ceosand.catholic.edu.au).

Reference should also be made to the Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy to ensure that all obligations are complied with in relation to reporting an allegation of reportable conduct.



What if a student or another child informs you of a reportable allegation?	What if a staff member or another adult informs you of a reportable allegation?
1. The first step should always be to ensure the student/child is safe. If you believe a child faces immediate danger or risk of harm, contact Victoria Police on 000.	
<p>2. When speaking with a child or young person, it is important to remember that if they have decided to speak to you, then there is a good chance they trust you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the child or young person your full attention.</li> <li>• Listen calmly and empathically.</li> <li>• Reassure the child or young person that it is right to tell.</li> <li>• Accept the child or young person will disclose only what they are comfortable disclosing and recognise the bravery/strength of the child for talking about something that is difficult.</li> <li>• Let the child or young person take their time.</li> <li>• Let the child or young person use their own words.</li> <li>• Don't make promises you cannot keep.</li> </ul>	2. Thank the individual for bringing the allegation to your attention. Offer them support and assistance as necessary. If they are a staff member, refer them to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), where available.
3. Tell the child or young person what you plan to do next.	3. Explain to the person making the report that the school will manage the concern confidentially and, to protect all parties, they should not discuss the matter.
4. Take a moment to make a record of the allegations. If appropriate, use <u><a href="#">PROTECT: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools</a></u> . You may also make a note in your diary. If a staff member, parent/guardian/carer or other adult was present, ask them to make a record as well.	
5. Consider whether you need to refer the matter to Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection. If necessary, report the matter in accordance with the actions documented in <u><a href="#">PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools</a></u> and <u><a href="#">Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse</a></u> , using <u><a href="#">PROTECT: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools</a></u> .	
6. If relevant, notify the child's parents/guardians/carers following advice in <u><a href="#">PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools</a></u> and <u><a href="#">Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse</a></u> .	

What if a student or another child informs you of a reportable allegation?	What if a staff member or another adult informs you of a reportable allegation?
7. As soon as practicable, contact the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team for advice (including guidance as to whether the alleged conduct is reportable), support and assistance to discuss the circumstances, and notify the Chief Executive Director.	
8. If the matter does involve a reportable allegation, the Principal, with the assistance of the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team will notify the CCYP with authorisation from the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer.	
9. Conduct a risk assessment (with the assistance of CES Ltd Safeguarding Team) to determine any measures that should be put in place to manage the person against whom allegations have been made, and to protect the student(s)/child(ren) against whom reportable conduct may have occurred.	

If you think you have a reportable allegation, it is important that you:

- do not say or do anything to suggest to the student that you doubt them or make them feel ashamed to have revealed the allegation
- do not start investigating the allegation, including unnecessarily questioning the student or speaking with the person who is the subject of the allegation, without conducting a risk assessment; otherwise you may be putting the student, the staff member, the school or the investigation at risk.

### Child FIRST/The Orange Door

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, including family violence, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing (e.g. risk-taking behaviour, parenting difficulties, isolation from family or lack of support), **you must still act**. This may include making a referral to or seeking advice from Child FIRST/The Orange Door.

Child FIRST/The Orange Door is a family information, referral and support team run by a registered community service in a local area that can receive confidential referrals about a child of concern. It does not have any statutory powers to protect a child, but can refer matters to relevant services.

You should make a report to Child FIRST/The Orange Door if:

- you have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- your concerns are about circumstances that have a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- the child's immediate safety is not compromised

- you and the school have discussed the referral to Child FIRST/The Orange Door with the child's parents/carers, and all parties are supportive of this decision.

Where you believe that the child's parents/carers will not be supportive of the referral, or the child is partaking in any risk-taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child or others, you may refer the matter to DHHS Child Protection.

If you are unsure of what action to take in response to your concerns about a child, speak to the Principal or a member of the school's Leadership Team, or contact DFFH Child Protection or Child FIRST/The Orange Door for further advice.

For more information, refer to *PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools*.

### **Making additional reports**

After you have made a report, you may continue to suspect that a child is at risk and in need of protection. Any further observations should continue to be recorded and a report made on each separate occasion where a belief has been formed – on reasonable grounds – that a child is likely to be at risk and in need of protection. Additional reports should use the same format outlined above in this Policy at Critical Action 2: Reporting to Authorities.

If there is any suspicion that this relates to a sexual offence involving a person over 18 and a child under 16, then it must be reported to Victoria Police. For more information, refer to the Failure to disclose section of this Policy.

Where a staff member is aware that another school staff member has formed a reasonable belief about the same child on the same occasion, or based on the same indicators of abuse, and has made a report to the appropriate authority, the staff member need not make a further report.

However, if the staff member has formed a reasonable belief of abuse or significant risk of abuse to the child based on different observations, further indicators or additional information, a further report must be made to the appropriate authority detailing this additional information.

### **2.5.3 Critical Action 3: Contacting Parents/Guardians/Carers**

Where it is suspected that a child has been or is at risk of being abused, it is critical that parents/carers of the child are notified as soon as practicable after a report is made to the authorities.

The school must always seek advice from Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection to ensure that it is appropriate to contact the parents/carers.

In circumstances of family violence, staff of should:

- take care not to inadvertently alert the alleged perpetrator by notifying parents/carers as it could increase risk of harm to the child, other family members or school staff
- seek advice from DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST/The Orange Door before alerting parents/carers about safe strategies for communicating with a parent/carer who is experiencing family violence and on recommending family violence support services.

Advice from **Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection** will depend on a number of factors, including whether:

- the parents/guardians/carers of the child are alleged to have engaged in the abuse (including in circumstances of suspected family violence)
- a disclosure to the parents/guardians/carers may result in further abuse to the child
- the child is a mature minor (at least 17 years of age and assessed to be sufficiently mature and intelligent to make decisions for themselves) and has requested that their parents/guardians/carers not be notified – the school should insist that another responsible adult is notified in lieu of the parents/carers
- the notification of parents/guardians/carers would adversely affect an investigation of the matter by external authorities.

Where the suspicion of abuse or risk of abuse has not yet warranted a reasonable belief, parents/guardians/carers should also be notified promptly after the school has carefully considered the factors listed above.

In some circumstances, a child may have returned to the care of their parent/guardian/carer before advice has been received from Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection. In these circumstances, staff should not share any information with the parent/guardian/carer that may place the child or any other person at risk, or where the child is a mature minor.

For detailed guidance on how to have this conversation with a parent, guardian or carer, refer to [PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

#### 2.5.4 Critical Action 4: Providing Ongoing Support

School staff who witness a child abuse incident, receive a disclosure or develop a suspicion of child abuse (including exposure to family violence) have a critical role to play in supporting students impacted by the child abuse matter to ensure that they feel supported and safe at the school. Schools also play a critical role in building students' resilience and protective factors, which can reduce the long-term impacts of child abuse by providing them with the opportunity to be

supported and heard by a school staff member they trust.

Support provided to students at school includes:

- regularly communicating with the student or students and their parents/guardians/carers where appropriate
- convening a Student Support Group of school wellbeing staff and teachers to plan, support and monitor affected students
- developing Student Support Plans for students impacted by the incident to ensure appropriate levels of care and support are provided depending on their involvement.

You should contact the school's designated Student Pastoral Wellbeing Officer for a description of the range of school-based support services that may be available, including SAFEMinds and referrals to family violence services, Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) or headspace.

Where external authorities are investigating a report of abuse or risk of abuse, it is the role of the Principal to ensure that students are supported throughout interviews at the school. For more information on this topic, refer to CES Ltd Child Safety Guidelines – Police and Child Protection Interviews Protocols.

The principal has a duty to provide support to school staff members who have witnessed an incident or disclosure, or who have made a report to external authorities about a reasonable belief of child abuse. It is important that we remember that staff members may have also experienced child abuse (including family violence) or be experiencing family violence and abuse in their own lives. Staff members requiring wellbeing support can contact the school's EAP provider.

Information to support Our Lady's Primary School understanding their obligation to employees and to provide suggestions of how to assist employees experiencing family and domestic violence may be found in the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd's [Family and Domestic Violence: A Guide to Supporting Staff](#).

Our Lady's Primary School will conduct a review of the reporting process four to six weeks after a report has been made to identify if any follow-up support actions are needed. Refer to [PROTECT: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools](#) for more information.

### **Potential consequences of making a report**

This table describes the potential consequences of making a report.

Potential consequence	Description
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or parent of the report</li> <li>• the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed</li> <li>• a court or tribunal decides that it is necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child</li> <li>• a court or tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to provide evidence.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional protection</b>	<p>If a report is made in good faith:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter</li> <li>• the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>Interviews</b>	<p>DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the school without their parent/guardian/carer’s knowledge or consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing children and young people at school should only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the best interests of the child to proceed in this manner.</li> <li>• DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the principal or a member of the Leadership Team of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.</li> <li>• When DFFH Child Protection workers/police officers come to the school premises, the Principal or a member of the Leadership Team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.</li> <li>• When a child or young person is being interviewed by DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, school staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the child or young person.</li> </ul> <p>For more information on these requests and school responsibilities, see CES Ltd Child Safety School Guidelines – Police and Child Protection Interviews Protocols.</p>

Potential consequence	Description
<b>Support for the child or young person</b>	<p>The roles and responsibilities of the principal or other school staff in supporting children who are involved with DFFH Child Protection may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acting as a support person for the child or young person</li> <li>• attending DFFH Child Protection case-planning meetings</li> <li>• observing and monitoring the child’s behaviour</li> <li>• liaising with professionals.</li> </ul>
<b>Requests for information</b>	<p>DFFH Child Protection and/or Child FIRST/The Orange Door and/or Victoria Police may request information about the child or family for the purpose of investigating a report and assessing the risk to the child or young person.</p> <p>In certain circumstances, DHHS Child Protection can also direct school staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the child. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DFFH Child Protection. Refer to <a href="#"><i>PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools</i></a>.</p>
<b>Witness summons</b>	<p>If DFFH Child Protection makes a protection application in the Children’s Court of Victoria, any party to the application may issue a witness summons to produce documents and/or to give evidence in the proceedings. See CES Ltd Child Safety Guidelines – Police and Child Protection Interviews Protocols.</p>

### **Principal's obligation to ensure compliance**

Where a staff member witnesses a child abuse incident, receives a disclosure or develops a suspicion of child abuse (including exposure to family violence), they must inform the principal as soon as possible.

If, for some reason, the staff member who has witnessed a child abuse incident, received a disclosure or developed a suspicion of child abuse is unable to perform their role in responding to and/or reporting the matter, the staff member must inform the principal. The principal will then identify an appropriate alternative person and will allocate responsibility for responding to and/or reporting the matter to that person.

The principal must put in place steps to monitor overall school compliance of with this Policy.

### **Other obligations relating to concerns regarding child abuse**

If a Our Lady's Primary School staff member has an obligation under this Policy to fulfill a particular role or responsibility, this does not displace or discharge any other obligations that may exist where a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

### **Responding to complaints or concerns**

Our Lady's Primary School may receive complaints or concerns about staff management of a child abuse incident. These complaints or concerns may be voiced by parents/guardians/carers or others within the school community.

The school should follow its internal complaints-handling procedure and process to ensure that all complaints, concerns or feedback on school policies, procedures or processes are effectively captured and appropriately managed.

It is important that, as a first step, the school ensures that the complaint does not raise concerns that child abuse or a risk of child abuse has gone unreported.

If this is the case, school staff should follow Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse to ensure that any new information received through a complaint or concern from a member of the school community is reported to authorities where required.

Policy Owner	Chief Student Pastoral Wellbeing Officer
Approving Body	CES Ltd Board
Approval Date	May 2022
Risk Rating	High
Date of Next Review	May 2023