



Prevention of Child Abuse Policy

Policy Statement

Schools and their communities have a vital role in supporting children and their families and in protecting students who may be at risk of harm due to neglect or child abuse¹, especially sexual abuse.

This policy, which implements the 2014 and 2015 amendments to the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* as well as Ministerial Order 870 implementing the Child Safe Standards 2016, is designed to ensure reasonable steps are taken so that students are safe from sexual and other forms of child abuse.

Legal Requirement

The *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* was amended in 2014 and 2015 to include offences of:

1. failing to disclose a sexual offence
2. grooming for sexual conduct
3. failing to protect a child from a sexual offence.

Consequently all adult members of the Ivanhoe Girls' school community, including Board Members, all staff, all students over 18 and all volunteers must understand their role and responsibility in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children under 16 in accordance with *the Act*. *The Act* requires that:

1. all individuals aged 18 and over (other than those mandated to report to Department of Human Services Child Protection, DHS) report to Police (000) any reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under 16
2. individuals associated with the School who have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that student(s) under 16 become the victim of sexual abuse, including grooming, do so.

In addition Ministerial Order 870 requires all schools to fully implement the Child Safe Standards. This policy also documents the processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Disclosure of Child Abuse and/or a Sexual Offence

Guidelines

The School will ensure that all members of the school community, including staff members, students aged 18 and over, Board members, volunteers and parents are aware of their responsibilities under amendments to the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* and especially their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child under 16 to Police as soon as it is

¹ **child abuse** includes:

- a) any act committed against a child involving –
 - i. a sexual offence; or
 - ii. an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming); and
- b) the infliction, on a child, of –
 - i. physical violence; or
 - ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and serious neglect of a child.

practicable to do so and their responsibilities under Ministerial Order 870 regarding child safe standards. Failure to do so is a criminal offence (except where this information has already been reported to Department of Human Services Child Protection, DHS as a mandatory report).

The School will provide support for any child affected as well as staff and students to ensure the reporting and subsequent action takes place in a framework of maximum care and support.

Disclosure of an Incident of Child Abuse to You

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you, you should:

- try and separate them from other children discretely and listen to them carefully;
- let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred;
- reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing;
- explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/care giver, specific people in your organisation, or to the police;
- do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe;
- do not leave the child in a distressed state - if they seem at ease in your company stay with them, otherwise get support from the counselling/pastoral team;
- provide them with an incident report form (Appendix 1) to complete or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this;
- as soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Principal (or delegate), police or DHS;
- ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately and that the record is stored securely as a Pastoral Level 3 document or above.

Forming a Belief

A belief is considered to be more than suspicion. Proof is not required that abuse has occurred or is likely to occur. A belief is sufficient. Reasonable grounds can be thought of as the mechanism for forming the belief. These include situations where:

- a child states that they have been abused;
- a child states that they know someone who has been abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- someone who knows the child states that the child has been abused;
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been abused or is likely to be;
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been abused.

Making a Report regarding Sexual Abuse

Once an adult 18 or over forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria they must report this to Victoria Police, either by dialling 000 (112 from an inactive mobile) or in person to Victoria Police.

The only exceptions to this are when:

- the victim is 16 or over and does not have an intellectual disability which limits her/his capacity to make an informed decision and she/he does not want the matter reported to Police
- the victim discloses the information in confidence in the course of a therapeutic relationship with a registered medical practitioner or psychologist
- the victim was aged 16 or over before 27 October 2014 and or in circumstances where:
 - the matter has already been reported to DHS or Police and/or;
 - a fear that disclosure will place someone (other than the alleged perpetrator) at risk of harm are considered reasonable excuses for failing to comply.

Mandatory Reporting

Where a belief is formed that a child is subject to child abuse, teachers and other mandated professionals who form a reasonable belief that a child under 16 is the subject of sexual or physical abuse are mandated to report this to the DHS (see separate Mandatory Reporting Policy).

School Response

Where a member of the school community forms a reasonable belief that a child is being subjected to abuse by an adult associated with the School, they must immediately notify the Principal (or delegate) who will act to reduce the risk immediately. The alleged offender will be removed from any contact with children, pending an investigation (with guidance from the Police). Reportable allegations of child abuse made against an Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar employee or volunteer are reported to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) as detailed in the School's Child Safety Policy.

N.B. Reporting any suspected child abuse to the Principal (or delegate) does not fulfil the individual's own personal responsibility to report a reasonable belief of sexual abuse to the police and/or a mandated staff member's personal responsibility to report sexual and/or physical abuse to DHS.

Student Wellbeing

The School takes its responsibility for the wellbeing of any child/children who may be the victims of child abuse seriously. This includes any child/children connected to the alleged victim(s) of child abuse. Support from the School's counsellors (registered psychologists) and pastoral care team will be provided to any children affected.

Records

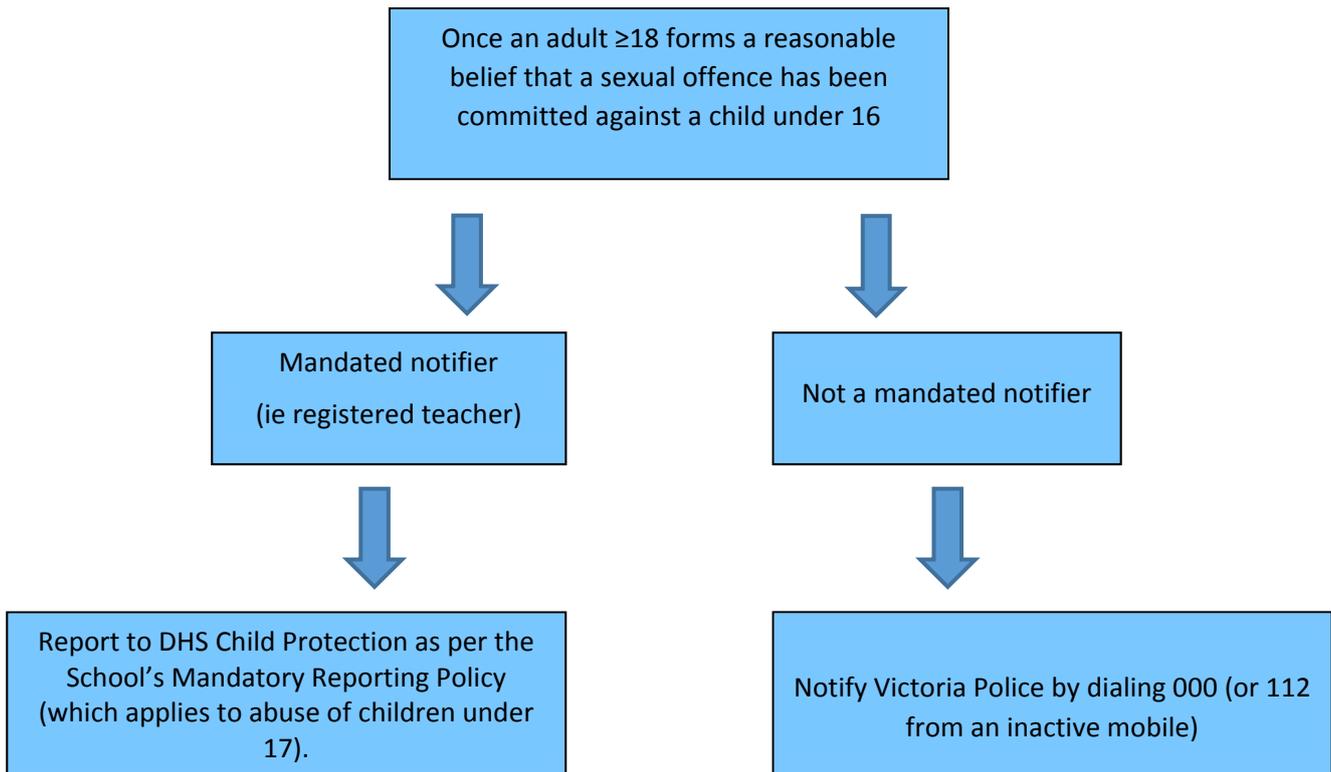
All documentation regarding allegations of child abuse, including:

- the initial incident report
- the reporting to relevant authorities
- reports of investigations by the School and
- any other relevant documentation

All will be stored confidentially and securely by the School, both in hard copy and electronically as a Level 3 or above document for the student/staff member.

Flow Chart

Forming a Belief on Reasonable Grounds



NB. The Principal (or delegate) must be notified immediately where the suspected child abuser is alleged to be a member of the School community so that the alleged offender can be removed from any contact with children pending an investigation.

Grooming

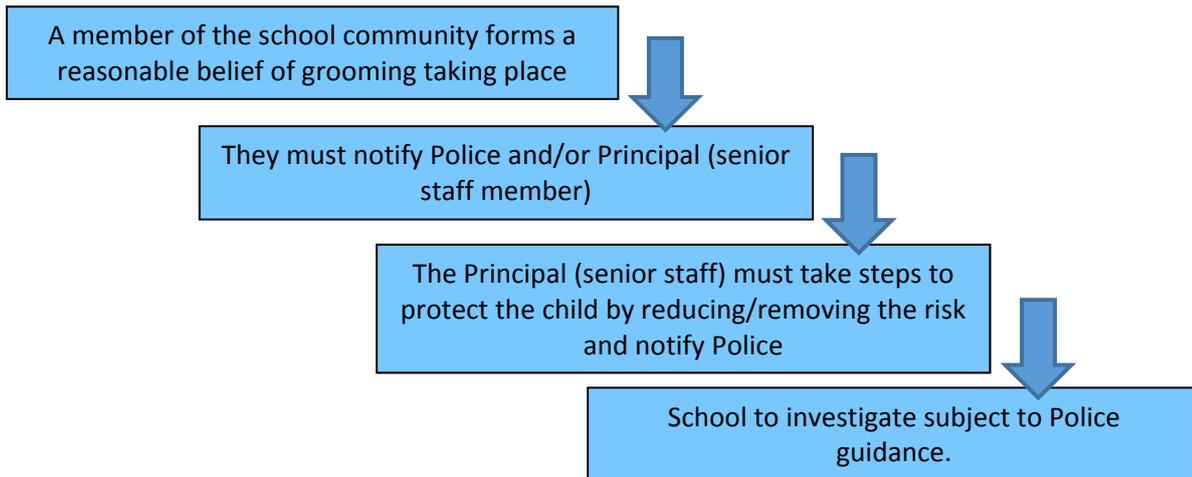
All school community members 18 and over also have the responsibility to report grooming, ie predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity of children under 16. Grooming occurs when an adult (18 and over) communicates by words or conduct with a child under 16 or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's engagement in or involvement in future sexual conduct, whether with the groomer or another adult.

Procedure

Where any member of the school community aged 18 or over becomes aware of grooming behaviour by a person 18 or over, they must notify the Police and/or Principal immediately.

It is the responsibility of the Principal (and others with authority/responsibility) to take action to protect the child.

Flow Chart



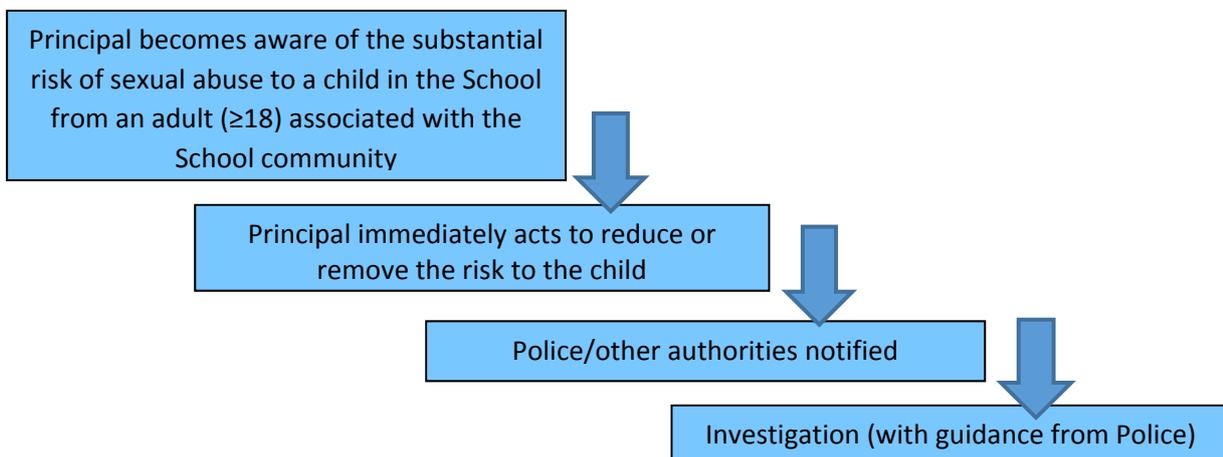
Failure to Protect

Persons who have authority in organisations such as schools (including the Principal, Senior Staff, Board Members and all teachers) have the responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child under 16 will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the School. Failure to do so will be a criminal offence.

Procedure

Once aware of a substantial risk of criminal sexual abuse to a child under 16 in the School from an adult (18 and over), the Principal (or delegate) will act to reduce or remove the risk immediately. The alleged offender will be removed from any contact with children pending an investigation.

Flow Chart



Resource: Department of Justice Betrayal of Trust: Fact Sheet