



Wycliffe Christian School

Child Safe Framework

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IMPORTANT RELATED DOCUMENTS

Employment Policy suite	Privacy Policy
Forming Responsible Learners Policy	Grievance Policy
Staff Code of Conduct	Student Code of Conduct
Code of Conduct for Parents and Visitors	School Rules
Anti-Bullying Policy, Student	Work, Health and Safety Policy Suite
Sexual Harassment Policy	

Relevant Legislation:

Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
Child Protection (Working With Children) Regulation 2013 (NSW)
Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021 (NSW)
Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012 (NSW)
Civil Liability Act 2002 (NSW)
Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)
Education Act 1990 (NSW)
Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
Limitation Act 1969 (NSW)

Reference:

Office of the Children's Guardian www.ocg.nsw.gov.au

- 'Child Safe Standards'
- Facts Sheets - <https://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme/fact-sheets>

Department of Communities & Justice (DCJ) – www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/families-and-communities (forwards to FACS website www.facs.nsw.gov.au)

NSW Police

NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal - www.ncat.nsw.gov.au

National Office for Child Safety - <https://pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/national-office-child-safety> (Dept of the Prime Minister & Cabinet)

- 'Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people' <https://pmc.gov.au/child-safety>

Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate (Department of Education)

Disability Standards for Education 2005, DET

NESA RANGS Manual References: 3.6.1 Safe and Supportive Environment

ACECQA National Quality Standards (NQS): 2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4 Child's Health & Safety

1 Introduction

Wycliffe Christian School endeavours to ensure that the school is a child safe environment where children are free of the risk of any form of abuse, or any other danger. The leadership is committed to creating a culture where children are free to disclose any matters of concern to them, where they will be listened to and where concerns are treated seriously and promptly.

The school's approach is both preventive and responsive to encourage and foster a culture of proactively dealing with, and reporting concerns relating to, child safety:

- Taking the necessary precautions to minimize harm;
- Ensuring safety networks are in place;
- Ensuring staff, volunteers and visitors on site are aware of their responsibilities for child safety
- Responding to indication or report of harm, abuse or danger to children;
- And acting in accordance with the legal obligation on all schools.

The school is committed to achieving the highest standards of education while fostering the dignity and integrity of the whole school community. The maintenance of a safe and supportive learning environment is essential to ensure that each student entrusted to our care is affirmed in his or her dignity and self-esteem as a person.

All staff must therefore endorse and embrace child safe standards as a fundamental responsibility.

2 Christian Rationale

Wycliffe Christian School has a commitment to honour and glorify God and to raise up effective leaders who will influence society for the glory of God.

Child Protection is part of the outworking of the Great Commandment to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbour as yourself'. (Luke 10:27)

In the context of Wycliffe Christian School, this love seeks to nurture and protect all people. Special regard to the children and young people placed into the School's care by parents and guardians – but also fostering the welfare of staff, volunteers and visitors to the School, the families and friends that form the community of the School, and the greater community. The education of students within Wycliffe Christian School aims to protect them from harm, and to train them to live according to the principles of God's love in their future careers, families and communities.

Love honours each person as precious to God and desires their well-being in all ways. Therefore the School's procedures seek to embody patience and kindness, honouring and serving others without prejudice or partiality. 'Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.' (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Wycliffe Christian School honours the authority God has given to the government of our nation, and upholds the laws of the land for the protection of children and young people, and the systems for the implementation of those laws. The School's procedures in respect to these laws will be followed with compassion, sensitivity and humility towards all persons involved, as 'love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.' (Romans 13:10)

3 Purpose Of This Document

This document sets out the policy and procedures of Wycliffe Christian School (“the School”) to assist staff, and others involved with children in the school, in understanding and fulfilling their legal and professional obligations for the safety and protection of children. This Policy gives both a prevention and response perspective.

This Policy will:

- set out the school’s processes for a child safe culture;
- identify to staff and others their legal obligations in relation to child safety;
- explain to staff and others what is required of them to comply with, and implement, those obligations at a practical level;
- how the school will respond to an incident or allegation of child abuse or reportable conduct; and
- explain the procedures to be followed for Working with Children Checks (WWCC) of workers in child-related positions.

4 Delegation Overview

<i>Responsibilities</i>	<i>Evidence of Compliance</i>
Board	
Ensure adequate policies and procedures in place within the school for child protection	Board reports
Monitor breaches of compliance	Board reports
Ensure appropriate staff disciplinary measures	Board reports
Principal	
Compliance with guidelines and procedures as Head of Relevant Entity (HRE)	Records of investigations
Ensure all staff and others working with children in the school are aware of their obligation to report suspected child abuse	CPL records; Register of Mandatory Reporting
Ensure compliance with the processes and policies set out in this document	Secure files; CPL Policy & calendar
Ensure implementation of Child Safe Standards across the school	Audit/ review
Ensure review of this document	Version history
Ensure all staff have current ‘Working With Children Check’ clearance	Recruitment Policy; WWCC clearance register
Maintain systems for a safe environment for students	Welfare Policy; WHS Policy; ‘compass database’ student welfare records
Ensure systems for communication of allegations/ convictions; + reporting & investigating incidents	This document; confidential files
Ensure timely reporting/ notification to Regulators	Notifications; reports
Ensure adequate record keeping for audit or inspection by government authorities or CEN	Records of investigations + notifications; reports to CEN

Ensure annual staff training; and that contractors and volunteers are aware of their child protection responsibilities	PD Calendar; Register of mandatory PD; Signed Staff CoC (annually)
Authorised Investigator/s	
Compliance with guidelines and procedures as Authorised Investigator	Records of investigations
Maintain training currency	Records of PD/ training
Business Manager	
Ensure child safe recruitment policies	
Ensure all recruitment paper work complete	Applicant personnel files
Ensure WWCC verification prior to commencement of work	WWCC files
Ensure induction of all staff prior to commencement of work	Induction records
Ensure WWCC currency maintained	WWCC files
Ensure relevant induction; WWCC clearance; and records for contractors/ others on site	Contractor files
Ensure volunteers are adequately trained and WWCC verification obtained as needed	Volunteer Register; WWCC files
All School Staff	
Read and agree to comply with the practices of Child Protection and their responsibilities under the law, as set out in this Policy annually	Register of Annual Mandatory PD (Jan); Staff Induction Policy; CPL Policy; Sign on sheet 'Read Child Safe Framework'
Read and agree to comply with the Staff Code of Conduct (annually)	Annual Staff Code of Conduct files
Report according to the requirements of the law	(database); Confidential report files
Volunteers	
Attend training as required	Signed Volunteer Code of Conduct
Provide WWCC number as required	Volunteer WWCC files
Report suspected child abuse	Register of Mandatory Reporting
School community	
Respect for school environment and safety of students	Code of Conduct for Parents & Visitors
Cooperate with any investigation	Records of investigations

5 Definitions

In this Policy, unless a contrary intention appears:

Assault means an act committed intentionally or recklessly, which:

- applies physical force against a child without lawful justification or excuse (for example, hitting, dragging, pushing)
- causes a child to apprehend the immediate and unlawful use of physical force (for example, threatening words or gestures, regardless of intention to act)

Authorised Investigator means a staff member who has received training & accreditation in undertaking child protection investigations (E.g. CEN Hub Child Protection Services; ESPC training provider); or an external accredited investigator recognised by the OCG could be appointed

Child means a person under the age of 18 years.

Child Abuse includes child sexual abuse, physical assault, emotional abuse and neglect, whether or not with the consent of the child.

Child sexual abuse means any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography.

Child sexual abuse does not include sexual activity between consenting peers of similar ages.

Child Protection refers to the programs, measure and structures to prevent and respond to child abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence affecting children in all sectors, contexts and environments.

Child safe refers to

- conditions to reduce the likelihood of harm
- creation of conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying and reporting harm
- appropriate response to a disclosure, allegation and/ or suspicion of harm

Child safeguarding encompasses the concepts for creating an environment that is safe, inclusive and welcoming for children, including child protection systems.

Child Safe Standards – the primary framework to guide child safe practice; principle-based and outcomes-focussed

Child Safety Officers – these are the School Counsellor and the Head of Student Formation

Consent means that a person freely and voluntarily agrees to the sexual activity, from subsection 61HE(2) *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW).

Grooming means actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Head of Relevant Entity (HRE) is the Principal and has responsibility for notifying the Office Children's Guardian of reportable conduct matters, and for arranging the investigation, reporting and managing of outcomes and risk management of situation.

Ill-treatment means conduct towards a child that is unreasonable and seriously inappropriate, improper, inhumane or cruel. For example, a pattern of hostile or degrading comments or behaviour or behaviour management towards a child.

Mandatory Report means a report made in accordance with section 27 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW).

Neglect means a significant repeated, or single incident of, failure to provide adequate and proper food, supervision, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging for the child, that causes or is likely to cause harm to a child, by:

- a person with parental responsibility for the child, or
- an authorised carer of the child, or

- an employee, if the child is in the employee's care.

Office of the Children's Guardian is an independent statutory authority which regulates and oversees organisations as child safe; and upholds children's and young peoples' rights

Parent means any person having parental responsibility for a child, including the custody or care of a child.

Reasonable grounds means objective evidence for suspecting a risk of significant harm based on:

- first hand observations of the child, young person or family;
- disclosure from the child, young person, parent or another person; and
- inference based on professional training and /or experience.

Reportable allegation means any allegation of reportable conduct against an employee.

Reportable conduct has the same meaning as in the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* and includes:

- a sexual offence;
- sexual misconduct;
- ill-treatment of a child;
- neglect of a child;
- an assault against a child;
- an offence under section 43B (failure to protect) or section 316A (failure to report) of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW); and
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Reportable Conduct Scheme means the scheme set out in Part 4 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (NSW).

Reportable conviction – a conviction (including finding of guilt without the court proceeding to a conviction) in this state, or elsewhere, of an offence involving reportable conduct.

Risk of significant harm means a current concern for the safety, welfare or well-being of a child or young person because of the presence, to a significant extent, of any one or more of the circumstances set out at section 23 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW), which includes:

- the child's or young person's basic physical or psychological needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met;
- the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated;
- the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm; and
- a parent or other caregiver has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that the child or young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious psychological harm.

Sexual misconduct means any conduct with, towards or in the presence of a child that is sexual in nature (but is not a sexual offence) and includes the following (non-exhaustive) examples:

- descriptions of sexual acts without a legitimate reason to provide the descriptions
- sexual comments, conversations or communications
- comments to a child that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards the child, or another child.

Sexual offence means an offence of a sexual nature under a law of NSW, another state/ territory, or the Commonwealth committed against, with or in the presence of a child, such as:

- sexual touching of a child
- a child grooming offence
- production, dissemination or possession of child abuse material.

An alleged sexual offence does not have to be the subject of criminal investigation or charges for it to be categorised as a reportable allegation of a sexual offence.

WWCC means a clearance to engage in child-related work issued in accordance with the *Child Protection (Working with Children) 2012* (NSW).

WWCC Register means the register kept in accordance with section 9A of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) 2012* (NSW).

Young person means a person over the age of 16 and under the age of 18 years.

6 Policy

Wycliffe Christian School does not tolerate child abuse in any form. It aims to promote the best interests of children through a culture of child protection within the school and wider community.

All children, regardless of their gender, race or cultural background, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to a safe environment and protection from abuse.

6.1 Statement of Commitment

Wycliffe Christian School is committed to the safety, welfare and protection of all its students through:

- a safe physical and learning environment
- inclusive, transparent processes which promote children's participation
- The prevention of harm to a student as a shared responsibility between staff, volunteers, contractors and members of the school community
- Prompt and effective responses to any report of a student at risk of harm, including reporting to police and/ or appropriate regulators and agencies
- Supporting students' welfare
- Educating students regarding their rights; equipping them with appropriate skills to avoid, and report, uncomfortable or abusive situations; and considering the opinions of children in the development of its procedures for child protection.
- Supporting the active participation of all students in the programs, activities and services offered by the school
- Respectful engagement to support students with individual needs
- Respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities, and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Providing a range of ways to allow children to provide feedback and to raise concerns; and ensuring that children's views are listened to with respect
- The involvement of children in decision-making about matters that will directly affect them
- Maintaining procedurally fair and accessible complaints processes for all stakeholders

6.2 School Policy

The school's policies set out its processes to ensure:

- (a) Compliance with legal and professional responsibilities with regard to the safety and welfare of its students. . (Governance 3-1 Compliance Framework)
- (b) Staff education to recognise, appropriately handle and report situations where a student may be at risk of harm.
- (c) The participation of all staff in mandatory annual training in understanding and meeting their responsibilities in child protection.
 - Consistent, rigorous staff recruitment, screening and selection.

- Respect, fairness and consideration of all workers.
- Prompt handling of staff performance or professional conduct matters. (Employment & Recruitment policies; Anti-discrimination)
- Investigations into an allegation are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the appropriate regulator; and principles of procedural fairness.
- (d) Notifications shall be made to Regulators as required. (this document)
- (e) Records shall be maintained of all allegations or complaints, , and findings of, any investigation and notifications to the Regulator/s. (this document: Complaints Framework; Records Management policy)
 - Effective risk management processes (Governance 3-2 Risk Management Framework)

7 Legal Obligations

The legal obligations to ensure the safety of children at school include:

(a) Duty of care

Schools owe an ordinary and non-delegable duty of care to their students¹ by virtue of the vulnerability and dependency of children and the *loci parentis* role the school assumes in reference to each child.²

Schools are subject to a statutory duty to take reasonable precautions to prevent child sexual abuse in accordance with section 6F of the *Civil Liability Act 2002* (NSW). In determining whether a school took reasonable precautions to prevent child abuse, a court may take into account, amongst other things, whether the school complied with any applicable standards (however described) in respect of child safety.

(b) Screening of staff

Schools are prohibited from employing someone in child-related work if the school knows, or has reasonable cause to believe, that the person does not hold a WWCC or have a current application for a WWCC, or is subject to an interim bar within the meaning of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (NSW).

Schools are also required to ensure that volunteers and contractors are appropriately screened, or there is an available exemption pursuant to the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013* (NSW).

Schools are also required to keep a register recording relevant details relating to screening pursuant to section 9A of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (NSW).

In NSW, the WWCC regime is administered by the Office of the Children's Guardian (see www.ocg.nsw.gov.au)

(c) Mandatory reporting

School staff are mandatory reporters pursuant to section 27 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) requiring them, where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, to make a report

¹ *Geyer v Downs* (1977) 138 CLR 91.

² *The Commonwealth of Australia v Introvigne* [1982] HCA 40.

to the Department of Community and Justice (DCJ) of the name, or a description, of the child and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk of significant harm (see <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>)

(d) **The reportable conduct scheme**

The School (via the head of a relevant entity, or their delegate) is required to notify the Office of the Children's Guardian of reportable conduct pursuant to the reportable conduct scheme set out in the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (NSW). The head of a relevant entity is also required to ensure that the school has in place systems including a code of conduct, policies and processes for, amongst other things, preventing and detecting reportable conduct, receiving reports about reportable conduct, complaint handling and information sharing.

(e) **Child Safe Scheme**

The school must implement the Child Safe Standards to support the development of a strong culture that keeps children safe. The *Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Act 2021* (NSW) embeds the ten Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (NSW), to guide child safe practice in NSW. The Office of the Children's Guardian can monitor, investigate and enforce the implementation of the Child Safe Standards in schools.

- Standard 1 – Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
- Standard 2 – Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- Standard 3 – Families and communities are informed and involved
- Standard 4 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
- Standard 5 – People working with children are suitable and approved
- Standard 6 – Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child-focused
- Standard 7 – Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
- Standard 8 – Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
- Standard 9 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
- Standard 10 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

(f) **Criminal offences**

School staff are subject to the provisions in the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) in relation to criminal offences against children. Staff may also be subject to a failure to protect offence pursuant to section 43B of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), and subject to having otherwise made reports to government agencies, to the offence of failure to report child abuse pursuant to section 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW).

(g) **Requirement of registration and accreditation**

The NSW Education and Standards Authority (NESA) requires that 'a registered non-government school must have in place policies and procedures to ensure that it meets its legislative obligations in relation to child protection' (see requirement 3.6.1 in the

Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual). This requires that:

- all staff are informed annually of legal requirements re: child protection/ mandatory reporting/ other relevant school expectations
- all mandatory reporters are informed annually of obligations & processes for reporting
- all staff are informed annually of requirements to notify allegations of reportable conduct
- all persons in child-related work have WWCC clearance; + evidence maintained
- evidence is maintained of response to reportable matters, as required.

8 Child Safeguarding

The school's Child Safe Framework is based on the NSW Child Safe Standards and the school's risk management processes, to both protect the students in its care, and to continue to build its culture of safety and awareness, so that students are empowered to know their right to a safe childhood, to speak up and to access help.

This section provides an overview of the school's processes. Further details are found in the specific school policies and procedures.

8.1 Governance

The Board shall ensure:

- That effective policies and procedures are maintained for the safety and welfare of all children and young people.
- That the school maintains a culture of child safety and protection and is a safe environment
- That risk management is factored across all areas of child safety and protection (See: Office of the Children's Guardian resources for the development of a Child Safe Risk Management Plan; 'Risk Management and the Child Safe Standards' parts 1 and 2)
- With the school executive, that the Child Safe Standards are incorporated into current and new practice; and that children are prioritized
- The Principal shall report all critical incidents relating to child protection to the Board.

8.2 Staffing

Wycliffe Christian School requires that Staff who are appointed to positions in the school are suitable persons to occupy those positions, and understand their responsibilities in this area.

- (a) The child safety requirements of the school shall be set out in recruitment information.
- (b) The school advises applicants for child-related positions that it will check with their previous employers.
- (c) The school will undertake that all child-related staff have clearance under the Working With Children Check prior to commencement of work.
- (d) The school will keep a Register of WWCC clearances; and ensure currency for staff and volunteers, where required,

- (e) The Executive Office Assistant shall ensure that working with children checks are completed prior to the commencement of work and that the register is also updated as staff renew their clearance.
- (f) Any child-related worker, paid or voluntary, who is subsequently barred from engaging in child-related work will be immediately removed from child-related work upon notification of the bar to the School.
- (g) The school shall seek advice from OCG and/ or legal advice, where a staff member is named in reportable allegations.
- (h) Staffing is structured to provide supervision, training and support for all workers.
- (i) Teachers must be registered with NESA and fulfil current teacher accreditation requirements.

8.3 Staff Code of Conduct

- (a) Staff are made aware of the school's requirements for professional conduct of staff with students at all times.
- (b) All staff must be familiar with, and are required to agree to, the Staff Code of Conduct, and sign accordingly (as part of their employment contract) at the commencement of employment and at the commencement of each year following mandatory child protection training. (January PL week)
- (c) Records of staff signing off on this policy and the staff code of conduct shall be maintained in the PL register within Complispace.
- (d) Unprofessional conduct or non-compliance with Staff Code of Conduct or other school policies shall be dealt with according to the processes set out in the relevant awards.
- (e) Where the School receives a plausible complaint (meaning not clearly false or vexatious) of a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct that relates to a matter which would require an investigation under the Child Safe Framework, then the staff member may be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.
- (f) Where the Principal reasonably believes, on the face of evidence presented, that it is more probable than not that a staff member breached the Staff Code of Conduct, or any part of the Child Safe Framework, the staff member may be summarily dismissed from employment, following legal advice, if the conduct constitutes serious misconduct within the meaning of the employment agreement with the staff member.

8.4 Staff Responsibilities

- (a) **All staff** are Mandatory Reporters.
- (b) All staff must take the necessary steps to prevent and protect students from being harmed or exposed to harm, in consultation with the school Principal or, where the school Principal is unavailable, in consultation with a designated teacher.
- (c) All staff must report all allegations of reportable conduct, prior conviction for, or disciplinary proceedings in relation to, reportable conduct by staff to the Principal: whether in their own case or that of another staff member or volunteer.

- (d) Staff are expected to report behaviour of another staff member that crosses boundaries of expected standards of behaviour with children. Concerns or complaints which may be considered reportable conduct must be reported to the Principal.
- (e) Teachers have a particular duty of care for students: to exercise 'reasonable care' to protect them from risks of harm that are 'reasonably foreseeable' while students are involved in school activities.

8.5 Staff Training

In-service and induction processes will ensure that all staff are thoroughly conversant with this framework and child related procedures; and informed regarding changes and updates.

- (a) The Principal, as Head of Relevant Entity, and school Authorised Investigators, maintain currency through external provider training. Generally 3 yearly updates.
- (b) Child protection training for all staff occurs in the January PL week; and throughout the year in section meetings.
- (c) Staff are required to sign their agreement to the Staff Code of Conduct annually.
- (d) Staff are required to sign that they have read and agreed to comply with the Child Safe Framework (this document) annually.
- (e) Other resources: Office of the Children's Guardian – eLearning for staff; resources for kids; training events

8.6 Volunteers

- (a) All visitors to the site are required to sign in to the school.
- (b) A Code of Conduct for Parents and Visitors is displayed in public spaces.
- (c) Volunteers may be required to provide WWCC clearance, which must be verified by the school prior to the event e.g. required for overnight camps with student
- (d) Volunteers for longer term or overnight programs shall undergo training; and be required to sign a Volunteer Code of Conduct prior to the event.
- (e) Volunteers are required to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Principal / supervising teacher.
- (f) A Register of Volunteers is maintained for people involved in the school's programs; and of WWCC clearances where required.
- (g) Student volunteers working with other students out of hours are also required to sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct. e.g. After school programs

8.7 Contractors

- (a) Contractors are asked to provide to the school information relevant to their current licencing and WWCC if available.
- (b) Contractors are required to sign in and out of the school.

- (c) Contractors engaged in prolonged work on site shall be inducted to the site: including appropriate dealing with students and other staff and visitors; visitors and signing the Code of Conduct for Contractors.
- (d) Where possible, contract work is arranged to fall within school holidays.

8.8 Students

- (a) The school's expectations for student behaviour are set out in the 'Forming Responsible Learners policy.
- (b) Procedures for student welfare, mental health and safety are set out in the school's policies—especially: Attendance; Welfare, Discipline, Anti-bullying and safe online behaviour.
- (c) The school ensures effective age-appropriate programs to address the educational, social and personal needs of students. These are designed to be flexible, current and engaging.
- (d) The school values and respects students with individual medical, emotional, social, physical and learning needs and requirements, and seeks to partner effectively with their families for the student's personal and educational development.
- (e) The school seeks to build respectful relationships with the families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and those of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- (f) The school addresses the development of respectful personal relationships and Christian values with students in a safe environment for discussion. Students are informed about coercion in sexual relationships and how to seek, give and deny consent.
- (g) The school facilitates feedback and input from students in matters that concern their wellbeing and safety.
- (h) Students who are 18 years of age or older
 - 18 year old students would not ordinarily be mandatory reporters in NSW; but as 'adults', are subject to the offence of failure to report a child abuse offence. (See section: Procedures for Mandatory Reporting) .
 - Students 18 years of age are classed as adults in terms of relationships between older students and younger students:
 - the age of consent for sexual interactions in NSW is 16 years old; and
 - there is an available defence where the sexual interaction is between students of "similar age" (where the victim is above 14 years old and the age gap is not more than 2 years).

8.9 Early Childhood Education

Early education and care services are monitored, regulated, assessed and rated to ensure children are kept safe and secure. Services are assessed against the seven quality areas under the National Quality Standard (NQS) by the Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate (ECECD NSW).

Policies for early childhood are maintained separately, and meet the requirements of the national Quality Standards.

Where processes for the early childhood centre are managed by the school, e.g. enrolment, this is indicated. Child protection measures and reporting are managed by the school under the processes of this document

8.10 School Curriculum

- (a) Child protection and safety issues will be incorporated and implemented within the school curriculum (PDHPE) to promote age-appropriate child empowerment and participation in decisions that affect their lives and the lives of others.
- (b) The school aims to encourage a culture of openness which supports students to report their concerns.
- (c) Specific small groups may be convened to address vulnerabilities, needs and characteristics of the student body.

8.11 Remote Learning

- (a) Where students are unable to attend classes onsite the school shall enable students to complete lessons at home through alternate teaching strategies.

These may be: hard copy materials; emailed work; teaching resources on Google Classroom or other platforms; school-based online conferencing groups, or other as available.
- (b) The school's policies continue to apply for the safety of students, including the Staff Code of Conduct and the Student Code of Conduct. Additional protocols are in place for student safety in remote and online learning. The school shall undertake a Risk Assessment for extended periods of online learning.
- (c) Students are encouraged to report any concerns with online learning or other complaints to the school, as well as to their parents.

8.12 Work Placement/ Work Experience

- (a) For all VET students required to complete Work Placement hours. Child protection measures are based on policies and procedures developed by DET; and are built in to the process and documentation of informing employers and parents, and in preparing students in Work Placement readiness.
- (b) Work Experience

The school offers a work experience program for year 10 students. It follows practices similar to WP

8.13 External Providers

- (a) The school offers distance education in partnership with providers who hold child protection policies consistent its own.
- (b) Students are instructed to inform a staff member at the school if they find themselves in an unsafe environment.

8.14 Supporting Structures

Child protection is enhanced through the development of a safe and supportive school environment within the school, incorporating the Child Safe Standards, and a risk management approach to processes of:

- Staff supervision and duties
- Master Plan - Safe, secure campus and facilities, designed for situational prevention of harm to children;
- WHS -, incident management, support of student health and medication needs
- Excursions, camps and events management
- Student attendance and welfare;
- Anti-discrimination
- Anti-bullying;
- Pastoral care/ Chaplaincy;
- Teaching & learning, including learning support;
- Student leadership;
- Privacy;
- Complaints management.

These are set out in the school's policies and procedures. Students are engaged in age-appropriate discussions in how to access support and help.

8.15 Culture of Child Safety

A healthy and proactive culture of child safety is also fostered across the school through:

- Board responsibility to ensure student safety and wellbeing prioritised in school policies and procedures
- Promotion of the Child Safe Standards; and embedding them in existing and new programs and processes
- Senior leadership modelling the priority of child safety
- Delegated accountabilities & responsibilities
- Development of reporting culture – students & staff
- Particular needs of individual students are addressed according to the student's Individual Plan (IP)
- Student leaders meet with coordinating staff regularly to discuss issues and gather student opinion on matters of concern to the student body
- Partnership of strategic relationships – CEN; NESA; parents & families; local community

8.16 Communication and Consultation

The school seeks to communicate its commitment to child safety to the school community tools for doing this include:

- Information on the school's website
- The school's newsletter and other communications include sections on child well-being and developing resilience
- Scheduled parent-teacher meetings, and other communication.
- The Complaints Policy, which explains how to make a complaint to the school
- Surveys

- Providing age-appropriate opportunities for children to discuss and give feedback on relevant issues

8.17 Complaints

(a) A Complaint Against the Principal

An allegation of reportable conduct against the Principal must be reported directly to the Office of the Children's Guardian.

(b) Complaint Against a Staff Member

A complaint which may represent child abuse or reportable conduct shall be handled according to the procedures required by the relevant regulatory agencies, as set out in this document.

(c) Other complaints

Complaints which clearly do not represent child abuse or reportable conduct are handled according to the procedures of the Complaints Framework

8.18 Investigation of an Allegation of Child Abuse or Reportable Conduct

(a) Investigations shall be conducted according to the requirements of the relevant regulator.

(b) Interviewing Children

Guidelines for conversations and interviews involving children are given in the Interviewing Children Procedure.

(c) Protection of Staff

The School recognises that there is a danger that its staff could be seriously affected by false, vexatious or misconceived allegations against them. The School is therefore committed to investigating all allegations promptly and fairly.

(d) Procedural fairness (from OCG Fact Sheet 4)

Procedural fairness is practiced in investigations, as advised by regulators, external investigators and/ or the school's legal advisors with respect to the particular circumstances of the investigation and the overarching paramountcy of the safety, welfare and well-being of children. Generally:

- An appropriate level of confidentiality
- Identify and manage real or perceived conflicts of interest
- Conduct the investigation and make any decisions without bias
- Inform the subject of allegation (at an appropriate stage of the process) of the nature and scope of the allegations (with sufficient information so that they can understand the allegation and are able to respond to it), and the process to be followed
- Keep the employee reasonably informed of the progress of investigation
- Provide option of a support person for interviews
- Explain potential consequences of an adverse finding
- Provide a genuine opportunity to respond to allegations
- Put any further relevant adverse information that arises during the investigation and that relates to the subject of an allegation to them for a response

8.19 Counselling

The School will attempt to support students and staff who are the victims, or the accused, in cases of alleged child abuse by directing persons toward counselling and, if necessary, legal representation.

See also: www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au

8.20 Review

This framework and associated procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis as part of the general review of policies, including feedback from stakeholders, and as required by changes to the relevant legislation or regulatory procedures. Implementation of Child Safe Standards is monitored as processes are reviewed or introduced.

9 Procedures For Mandatory Reporting

NOTE: If there is immediate danger to the child, contact the Police (000) and/ or Helpline (132 111) directly.

All staff have a responsibility to recognise and respond to safety, welfare or wellbeing concerns for children and young people and inform their principal.

9.1 Mandatory Reporters

Under section 27 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW), **all staff in schools are mandatory reporters.**

- (a) The school also requires volunteers, and contractors required to have a WWCC clearance to work at the school, to report to their supervisor if they suspect that a child at the school is at risk of significant harm.
- (b) Although the legislative requirement ends at age 16, the School considers a 'child' to mean any student enrolled at school thereby extending the duty of staff to report concerns to cover all students, including those over the age of 16.
- (c) 18 year old students would not ordinarily be mandatory reporters in NSW. However, 18 year old students, as 'adults', are subject to the offence of failure to report a child abuse offence set out in section 316A of the Crimes Act 1900 (NSW). (See section: Failure to Report)

N.B. The requirements for mandatory reporters extend to all children, not just the students of this school and would include children the mandatory reporters are aware about by virtue of their role with the School (for example, the siblings of students at the school).

9.2 Mandatory Reports

The Principal:

- Must notify the Department of Communities & Justice (DCJ) if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child under the age of 16 years (and for the purpose of this policy, a child under the age of 18 years) is at risk of significant harm.
- Shall inform Police in the event of likely criminal activity.

All staff:

- Must report any suspicion, or disclosure, that a student is at risk of harm to the Principal, who must determine whether there are reasonable grounds for further action.
- In the event that the Principal determines there are not reasonable grounds to report, and the teacher disagrees, that teacher must notify the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) directly.
- In the event that no one is available to consult with, the teacher must take the necessary steps as required; and must make a written report to the Principal.

9.3 Where a staff member suspects risk of significant harm to child:

- (a) Any member of staff who, in the course of their work, suspects that a child or young person has been, or is, at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect, should as soon as practicable notify the Principal.
- (b) The Principal or his/her agent will use the Mandatory Reporter Guidance Tool (<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>) in order to help ascertain whether or not the child is at risk of significant harm.

Document and continue relationship / monitor: staff to retain personal records as appropriate.

Referrals (with a list of potential external agencies): staff to consult Pastoral Care and Learning Coordinator

Refer to child wellbeing unit or consult with a service/professional: staff to consult Pastoral Care and Learning Coordinator.

Report to the child protection helpline (in next 24 hours): staff to print or email a copy of the decision tree to the School Counsellor and Principal and to see one of them as soon as possible.

Immediate report to the Helpline Call 132 111: staff to print or email a copy of the decision tree to the School Counsellor and Principal and to see one of them immediately.

- (c) If it has been determined there **are** 'reasonable grounds' to suspect the child has been, or is, at risk of significant harm the Principal must promptly notify or authorise notification to DCJ.
- (d) Child on child abuse
Most instances of child on child abuse is dealt with according to the school's Discipline Policy and / or Anti-bullying Policy. Sustained and repeated instances of peer-based bullying may be referred to DCJ depending on the particular circumstances.
Inappropriate contact/ sexting etc may fall into the category for mandatory reporting.
- (e) Staff should inform the Principal when they become aware a student is engaging in problematic or harmful sexualised behaviour.

9.4 Reporting to Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)

Step 1 – Refer to the interactive on-line Mandatory Reporter Guide

The Mandatory Reporter Guide includes decision-trees to assess whether concerns meet the risk of significant harm threshold for reporting; and to identify alternative ways to support vulnerable children and their families.

- <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>

OR

If suspected risk of significant harm is imminent or high,

Call the **Child Protection Helpline** 132 111; or **Mandatory Reporters** ring: 133 627

NOTE: To submit a child protection report (eReport), mandatory reporters need to register online for the website above

Step 2 – Prepare information for report

- (a) If risk of significant harm is indicated after following the Mandatory Reporter Guide provide details about:
 - The risk of significant harm;
 - The child or young person;
 - The family background;
 - The reporter; and
 - The context of the report.
- (b) Submit information provided in the report to the Principal and the Authorised Investigator.
- (c) All Staff preparing the report or with access to the information must observe confidentiality in relation to the entire matter.

Step 3 – The Principal or Authorised Investigator must contact the Child Protection Helpline:

- Phone 132 111
- eReport

NOTE:

- Written notification must be provided to DCJ on the prescribed form or by eReport.
- Mandatory reporters need to register to submit eReports. (ChildStory Reporter Community website). This allows notification by email when there is a change in status for a report or to log in to see the status of any previous reports that have been submitted.
- If the Principal declines to report, and the staff member has a current concern of risk of significant harm to a child, the staff member should make the report.

Step 4 – File documentation

The Principal must ensure that documentation is completed and filed confidentially.

Step 5 – Provide information to DCJ

The Principal must comply with a direction from DCJ to provide information about the student who is the subject of an investigation following a notification of risk of significant harm.

Note: Reports to DCJ are confidential and the reporter's identity is protected by law if the report is made in good faith.

9.5 Other matters to be aware of regarding a disclosure

- (a) A risk assessment should be completed; and measures taken to ensure the safety of the child and to manage any risks, in consultation with DCJ and/ or the Police.
- (b) If a child or family is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, engage strategies that promote self-determination and support participation in decision-making about children and young people.

Additionally, and for children and families who belong to a culturally and linguistically diverse communities, engage consultation and promote respectful relationships. Behaviours that are suspected of causing risk of significant harm to a child should not be minimised or dismissed on cultural grounds. Focus on the impact upon the child.

Behaviours or practices that are influenced by culture should not be reported just because they are unfamiliar to the reporter, but only if such practices impose a risk of significant harm to a child.

- (c) Once a report is made to the Child Protection Helpline, no further report needs to be made unless new information comes to hand.
- (d) Reports should be made in one form only, i.e. by phone or eReport. The summary page, or the decision report, from the online Mandatory Reporter Guide can be printed and filed in the School records.
- (e) Further investigation is normally left to DCJ or the Police. If there is some aspect of the case that directly involves the School, investigation must be in consultation with DCJ, and with care to avoid prejudicing any criminal investigation.
- (f) The Principal or staff members **MUST NOT** inform parents that a notification has been made. This is the responsibility of DCJ.
- (g) The Principal must inform a student who is to be interviewed by DCJ officers, or any other person:
 - that they have the right to refuse the interview; and
 - the right to have a support person attend any interview granted by the student.
- (h) The Principal **MUST NOT** inform parents/carers of an interview with the student, where suspected abuse involves a family member or close family friend. This is the responsibility of DCJ.
- (i) If the alleged offender is not a family member or close family friend, a student **MUST NOT** be interviewed unless a parent or their nominated representative is present.
- (j) The Principal or staff member should not attend as a nominee of the parents or carers.

- (k) Any person with a complaint or concern regarding an interview with a child should be referred to DCJ.
- (l) If the concerns do not fall within the category of 'significant harm' but are still matters of concern, the school may wish to deal with the matter internally or take action such as discussing the matter with the School Chaplain and/ or parents. If appropriate in the circumstances, refer the matter to a Family Referral Service.
- (m) The Principal will follow up with DCJ if, after a reasonable time, feedback has not occurred, particularly to ensure parents have been informed and to facilitate any general counselling that may be necessary at school.

9.6 Failure to report

- (a) It is a criminal offence to fail to report a child abuse offence pursuant to section 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW). In most instances, if the staff member has made a mandatory report then there is a 'reasonable excuse' not to also report a concern to the NSW Police.

However, there will be circumstances where a report may need to be made to the NSW Police. For example, where the concern relates to historic child sexual abuse at the School and does not relate to a current or future risk of significant harm to a child.
- (b) 18 year old students, as 'adults', are subject to the offence of failure to report a child abuse offence set out in section 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW).

It would be a 'reasonable excuse' for them not to report the information if they obtained that information while under the age of 18 years old (see subsection 316A(2)(e)).

10 Procedures of the Reportable Conduct Scheme

Notification of 'Reportable Conduct' – Police may also be involved if likely crime (000)

Children's Guardian Act 2019 and the Reportable Conduct Scheme

The reportable conduct scheme covers the conduct, both inside and outside the school (a 'relevant entity' under the Act), of the school's 'employees'. , which include:

- Employees of the school
- Any volunteer engaged to provide services to children
- Any contractor who holds, or is required to hold, a WWCC for the purposes of the engagement with the school
- The head of a third-party employer contracted to provide services to children on behalf of the school, if the individual holds or is required to hold a WWCC

The school must notify the Office of the Children's Guardian of any reportable allegation or conviction against these employees, whether or not the alleged conduct is work-related.

These employees are recognised to have positions of authority over children and a duty of care to children. It is important for the school to be aware of an employee's child-related conduct in any context to assess and manage any risks in the workplace.

10.1 Context

(a) **Reportable conduct** may involve, briefly: (See: Definitions)

- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- assault, ill treatment, or neglect of a child
- certain offences under the Crimes Act (failure to protect s43B; failure to report s316A)
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child, whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child; where a 'child' is a person under the age of 18 years

(b) **Exclusions**

Reportable conduct does not extend to:

- Conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of a child, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the child and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards
- The use of physical force that, in all the circumstances, is trivial or negligible, but only if the matter is to be investigated and the result of the investigation recorded under workplace procedures

10.2 Responsibilities of Head of Relevant Entity (HRE)

The Head of Relevant Entity, or their delegate, is responsible to:

- Ensure systems for preventing, detecting and responding to reportable allegations or convictions
- Make all notifications to Office of the Children's Guardian as prescribed
- Must notify the Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate (DET) through the NQA-ITS portal within 24 hours of the incident or allegation of physical or sexual abuse of a child being educated at the school's preschool.
- Ensure risk assessment is completed as soon as practicable for the safety of children and other parties
- As soon as practicable after receiving the reportable allegation/ conviction, arrange for investigation
- Ensure the investigation is completed in a reasonable time and that procedural fairness is afforded those subject of the allegation
- Provide information re: allegation, ongoing investigation, finding and action taken to the alleged victim and their parents, unless the HRE considers it not in the public interest to do so
- By 30 calendar days after the HRE becomes aware of the reportable allegation, provide either final or update (interim) report
- Make a finding of reportable conduct if satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the case against the employee who is the subject of the reportable allegation has been proved (See: OCG Fact Sheet 8 – Making a Finding of Reportable Conduct)
- Provide information to the Children's Guardian as required
- Ensure confidentiality of information; disclose only as permitted by law

10.3 Staff Responsibilities

- (a) Staff must, as soon as practicable, inform the Principal if they:
 - Become aware of any conduct, allegation or complaint that may involve reportable conduct by another employee, volunteer or contractor to the school, and report the circumstances;
 - Become aware of any allegation of a conviction of, or disciplinary action in relation to, reportable conduct against another employee, volunteer or contractor to the school, or against themselves, and report the circumstances.
- (b) If a staff member gives a report to the Principal and becomes aware that the Principal has not reported to Office of the Children's Guardian, the staff member should alert the Office of the Children's Guardian to this.
- (c) In the case of an allegation of reportable conduct, or reportable conviction, against the Principal an employee must report directly to the Office of the Children's Guardian. All relevant details should be sent to: reportableconduct@ocg.nsw.gov.au
- (d) The school encourages and supports the appropriate reporting of child protection concerns. Also, protections apply for people who make reports. See sections 63 and 64 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (NSW).

10.4 Role of the Office of the Children's Guardian

- (a) The Reportable Conduct Directorate at the Office of the Children's Guardian can:
 - Monitor and guide the progress of the school's investigation into the reportable allegation or conviction
 - Require further information about the allegation or the school's response to it
 - Assess whether the school conducted a fair, transparent, effective and timely investigation
 - Determine if the information provided is a reportable allegation or reportable conviction
 - Determine whether appropriate actions have been taken by the school following the investigation
 - Work with the school to help it improve their child protection systems and responses to reportable allegations
 - Share information within the Office of the Children's Guardian and other external agencies to keep children safe
- (b) Following the school's notification the Office of the Children's Guardian may assess that the allegation does not meet the threshold of a reportable allegation or conviction.
- (c) If the allegation is considered to meet the threshold of a reportable allegation or conviction the Office of the Children's Guardian may decide whether further information, oversight or investigation is required by the Office of the Children's Guardian.

10.5 Reporting to the Office of the Children's Guardian

NOTE: This is an allegation-based system. It is the fact of an allegation, and what is alleged, that triggers the obligation to report to the Office of the Children's Guardian.

A notification of a reportable allegation to Office of the Children's Guardian does not replace reporting obligations to NSW Police, the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), or any other relevant agency.

If another agency is already investigating the reportable allegation, the school should consult with them before taking any action, other than to address any immediate risk.

Forms to report to the Office of the Children's Guardian are found at:

www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme

(a) **Initial Report** (7 business days)

The Principal/ Head of Relevant Entity is required to notify the Children's Guardian within seven (7) business days of becoming aware of:

- an allegation of reportable conduct; or
- the discovery, or notification, of a reportable conviction for, or previous disciplinary proceeding in relation to, reportable conduct

by any employee of the school under the categories described; following the requirements of the 7-day Notification Form. Further information is available on the Children's Guardian website.

Following notification, the Office of the Children's Guardian can provide guidance to the school about how to respond to the allegation.

(b) **Report within 30 calendar days**

- The Final Entity report is to be provided on completion of the investigation within 30 days (Entity Report Form).

A determination must be made for every reportable allegation.

OR

- If not finalised by 30 days, an interim/ update report is to be made by 30 days (30 Day Report Form); including an estimated timeframe for completion.

Additional information for completing the forms is available on the website.

Penalties may apply for failure to comply with reporting obligations.

10.6 The School's Response to an Allegation of Reportable Conduct

(a) **Summary**

- Clarify the allegation so that it is understood what conduct the allegation relates to
- Report to Police, if required
- Make mandatory report to DCJ if there is a concern that there is a child at risk of significant harm
- Conduct a risk assessment; and manage any immediate risk to children or others
- Notify the Office of the Children's Guardian within 7 days
- Plan and conduct an investigation into the allegation, or arrange external investigation, as soon as practicable – unless prevented by prior investigation requirements of police other agencies
- Have regard for principles of procedural fairness

- Advise the employee, volunteer or contractor that a reportable allegation has been made against them (ensuring clearance from Police or DCJ) and give opportunity for them to submit a written account to the HRE if they wish
- Make a finding based on all relevant factors within a reasonable timeframe (with appropriate weight given to factors that have probative value)
- Draft report including findings, outcomes, recommendations and actions
- Report - interim or final - to the Office of the Children's Guardian within 30 days
- Provide report and supporting documents to Office of the Children's Guardian for review and finalisation
- Secure storage of all information

(b) Clarifying the Allegation

On receiving an allegation which may involve reportable conduct against an employee the Principal shall consult with the 'Authorised Investigator/s' to promptly decide whether or not, on the face of the information provided, the matter is reportable to the Office of the Children's Guardian. The Authorised Investigator/s may seek clarification and record the details but should not commence an investigation.

If, on the face of it:

- the alleged behaviour was reasonable for the purposes of discipline, management or care of children and in line with the school's code of conduct, then the matter is not reportable to the Office of the Children's Guardian, but needs to be recorded by the entity and dealt with as a complaint in the ordinary course;
- the alleged behaviour involved the use of physical force that, in all the circumstances, was trivial or negligible, then the matter should be investigated and the result of the investigation recorded under workplace employment procedures.

If the allegation does not fit into these categories, the HRE shall contact the Office of the Children's Guardian for advice, plan for an investigation and follow the reporting requirements outlined.

(c) If the reporter is a child:

- Allow the child to speak freely, without prompting, to give understanding to the type of allegation
- Provide support, but do not ask further questions
- If further information is required to clarify the nature of the concern, use open-ended questions
- If there may be immediate risk of serious harm to the child, or other children, take prompt and decisive action to manage risk to prevent further contact between an employee and a child who is the alleged victim of possible reportable conduct, or any other children
- Follow other reporting procedures
- Secure any evidence
- Document at earliest opportunity

(d) **Risk Management**

The HRE is responsible to ensure that any risk posed to a child(ren) by an employee is assessed and managed whilst responding to reportable allegations.

(i) The initial risk assessment is to avoid or minimise risk to:

- The child who is the subject of the allegation, or other children with whom the employee may have contact
- The employee against whom the allegation has been made
- Other parties to the alleged incident, such as witnesses, the reporter
- The school
- Proper investigation of the allegation

(ii) Risk management shall include:

- Initial assessment on receipt of reportable allegation, based on all relevant information at the time
- Appropriate revision and adjustment of risk assessment during investigation. The Office of the Children's Guardian can advise in regard to new information.
- Consideration of potential risk to the investigation, or any individual's health and safety, before informing an employee about the reportable allegation against them
- Appropriate level and type of support provided to the employee who is the subject of the reportable allegation
- Final risk assessment, provided to Office of the Children's Guardian in final report, at end of investigation:
- Including in relation to child/ children involved; employee; organisational culture and processes etc, and
- regardless of finding, including action/s taken and reasons for action or no action.
- Records maintained of decisions, actions and the reasons for them, at each stage

(e) **Employment-Related Issues**

Following an allegation, the school must consider the most appropriate action to be taken in respect of the employee based on the risk assessment.

Factors to be considered for the risk assessment include:

- The nature and seriousness of the allegation;
- The vulnerability of the children the employee would be in contact with in remaining at school;
- The nature of the position occupied by the employee;
- The amount and level of supervision available for the employee;
- The availability of support for the employee on a day-to-day basis if their duties are unchanged;
- The disciplinary history of the employee;
- The safety of the employee;
- Any comment made by the employee;
- Other possible risks to the investigation.

If police/ DCJ are involved, the school must check that any proposed action will not interfere with the investigation.

NOTE: A decision to take action as a result of a risk assessment:

- Is not an indication that the alleged conduct occurred or is considered to have occurred;
- Is not disciplinary action;
- Does not mean that a finding has been made; and
- Will not influence the investigation's finding.

Action may include: the employee being temporarily relieved of some duties; being required to avoid certain pupils; or in special cases, being suspended from duty.

10.7 Conduct of an Investigation

NOTE: If Police are investigating an allegation, the school must not commence any investigation until Police give written notice of having completed their investigation. Records of communication must be kept.

(a) Principles for an Investigation

1. All investigations must be conducted in an impartial, independent and objective manner in regard to: the alleged victim, the accused person and the reputation of the school. Information gathering must be procedurally fair.
2. An unfair process is a risk to the investigation and subsequent outcomes.
3. Decision-making shall be transparent, supported by evidence and shall address risk.
4. Confidentiality
 - Lack of confidentiality is a risk to the investigation
 - Only persons with a need to know about the reportable allegation should be informed of it; and must maintain a high level of confidentiality to protect the integrity of the investigation.
 - All parties in the investigation should be advised of the need for confidentiality.
 - Shall be planned and managed throughout
 - Breaches of confidentiality shall be subject to disciplinary action
5. The accused employee must not discuss the allegations with students (including the alleged victim) or with parents without the approval of the school.
6. The School should, as far as possible, make available counselling and support to all those involved in an investigation, particularly the victim and accused.
7. An Authorised Investigator will normally conduct an investigation. An external investigator may be engaged to undertake the investigation, e.g. in cases where a conflict of interest may arise.
8. Where another agency has conducted inquiries, the school may request information from their investigations pertaining to the safety, welfare and well-being of a child. (see Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW))
9. All communication with the Office of the Children's Guardian or other agencies, records and reports of allegations and investigations, will be kept in secure confidential files, with access limited to authorised staff; and cross-referenced to student files.

10. If key personnel leave or become unavailable during an investigation, all files will be handed over to the incoming staff member.
- (b) Prepare an **Investigation Plan** to facilitate the investigation process. Each step shall be planned, managed and documented.
 - Determine timeframes for each step
 - Appoint the investigator
 - Identify and address any cultural issues or special needs of parties and outline how these will be addressed
- (c) Any investigation will normally include the following steps:
 1. Clarify the allegation - seek a signed written statement detailing the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information. If the person making the allegation is unable or unwilling to make or sign a written statement: record details of the allegation as reported, using as far as possible the words used by the person making the allegation. Direct the person making the allegation to maintain confidentiality.
 2. Review risk assessment.
 3. Declare any conflicts of interest or personal biases of investigator/s.
 4. Identify and collect all available relevant evidence and information (ensure documentation is adequate and securely maintained).
 5. Interview all relevant witnesses (ensure all interviews are adequately recorded).
 6. Inform the employee who is the subject of the allegation of the substance of the allegation; only after any other investigating agency has given permission. (See 10.8).
 7. Give the employee enough information to meaningfully respond to the allegation, with regard to confidentiality. It may, in some circumstances, be inappropriate to advise the accused person of the identity of the person making the allegation.
 8. Interview the employee ensuring procedural fairness.
 9. Consider all the evidence and make a preliminary finding whether the allegation is sustained or not.
 10. If, on the balance of probability, the allegation is likely to be sustained the Principal to consider what, if any, disciplinary action is to be taken against the employee, in consultation with school Board and legal advice.

10.8 Notifying the Employee who is the Subject of an Allegation

- (a) If the police or DCJ are investigating an allegation, advice should be received from them about when to inform an employee about the details of an allegation. . The school may request information from an agency that relates to the safety, welfare or well-being of a child or young person.
- (b) Otherwise, the decision of when to inform the employee will depend on the potential risk to the investigation or any person's health and safety.
- (c) Within these constraints the employee should be told as soon as possible of the allegation made; if it is a reportable allegation, that it has been notified to the Office of the Children's

Guardian; and the process to be followed by the school, especially if the decision is made to remove the employee from face-to-face work with children.

The employee should be provided with appropriate support.

- (d) Where possible the employee should be given reasonable advance notice of an interview with the investigator; sufficient details of the allegation to allow the employee to have a genuine opportunity to respond; and advised they may have a support person at the interview.
- (e) A support person to an interview is there as an observer only: not as an advocate or to take an active role in the proceedings. **NOTE:** The nominated support person must be appropriate and agreed by the investigator – e.g. not a witness in the investigation.
- (f) A record must be kept of the meeting. This could be a digital recording, a full written record or short minutes.
- (g) The employee should be kept reasonably informed about the progress of the investigation.
- (h) The Principal or investigator shall explain the potential consequences of an adverse finding.

10.9 Informing the Alleged Victim and/ or Parents

- (a) Unless there are sound reasons not to, and depending on the age of the child or other circumstances, the school shall advise parents of a child who is involved that an allegation has been made; and seek permission to interview the child.
- (b) Unless the HRE is satisfied that disclosure is not in the public interest, he or she shall disclose the following information to the child who is the alleged victim and their parents (see section 57 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (NSW))
 - the progress of the investigation
 - the findings of the investigation
 - action to be taken in response to the findings.

10.10 Findings

- (a) In making a finding, the decision-maker must have regards to mandatory matters– whether the reportable allegation relates to conduct that is in breach of established standards applying to the employee; having regard to: professional standards; codes of conduct (professional and ethical); and accepted community standards (Division 6 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (NSW))
- (b) At the conclusion of the investigation a preliminary finding will be made on the balance of probabilities that:
 - the allegation was false; or
 - the allegation was vexatious, i.e. made without substance, or malicious; or
 - the allegation was misconceived, i.e. it was made in good faith, but either without substance or based upon a misunderstanding, or the incident could not reasonably be considered reportable conduct; or
 - the allegation was not sustained; or
 - the allegation was not one of reportable conduct, but might constitute a breach of professional behaviour or judgement, which requires further professional disciplinary action; or

- the allegation was sustained, and the matter required further disciplinary action, and reporting to the Office of the Children's Guardian.
- (c) The HRE shall advise the Children's Guardian of the finding made, and the final action they have taken, or will take, as a result of the investigation and the reasons for taking that action (or taking no action). The decision should be clearly documented with analysis of how the evidence supports the finding, and has informed the final risk assessment and the action to be taken.
- (d) Non-adverse finding i.e. other than reportable conduct – the decision-maker shall inform the employee in writing regarding the finding and any action the HRE will take.
- (e) Adverse finding i.e. reportable conduct
 - The employee should be informed in writing of a proposal to make an adverse finding and sufficient detail about the reasons for the finding (considering the rights and welfare of other parties); and given an opportunity to make a further submission in response within a reasonable time frame.
 - The decision-maker shall give genuine consideration to the submission by the employee, including
 - i. whether further inquiries should be made;
 - ii. or any lines of inquiry identified by the employee, and if the decision-maker chooses not to pursue those inquiries, documented sound reasons for the decision
 - The final decision shall notified to the employee in writing; including any relevant consequences and external referrals, or internal review or appeal options available to them.
 - The employee should be alerted to the consequent report to the WWCC Directorate in relation to a sustained finding of sexual misconduct, sexual offence or serious physical assault.

10.11 Disciplinary Proceedings

- (a) As a result of findings of the investigation the Principal and/or Board may take disciplinary proceedings against the employee. Such proceedings will have regard to procedural fairness and will usually involve:
 - Giving the employee details of the final findings;
 - Informing the employee of the possible action to be taken;
 - Giving the employee the right to respond.
- (b) Where a finding of reportable conduct is **not** made the school may determine a course of action is required in respect of the employee, such as training or remediation.
- (c) The Board shall determine the action to be taken with respect to the findings of an investigation into an allegation against the Principal.

10.12 Further Action

The school may determine that ongoing action is required, such as:

- Counselling and/ or support for the child/ children involved
- Support of the employee named in the allegation
- Further training/ awareness for staff
- Address gaps in school systems and practices

- Policy and procedural review

10.13 Complaint or Review

- (a) Any request by an employee for a review of a finding or decision must be accompanied by additional information that was not available to the employee at the time of the investigation.
- (b) A complaint may be made to the Office of the Children's Guardian in respect of any evidence of wrong-doing by the school.
- (c) The employee may make an appeal or complaint through the Fair Work Commission.

11 Procedures relating to WWCC

The Office of the Children's Guardian, through the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (NSW), aims to reduce the risk of abuse to children through the Working With Children Check (WWCC). A WWCC clearance is a requirement for a worker in child-related work in NSW.

'Worker' is defined comprehensively to include **paid, unpaid and other roles**.

Check the Office of the Children's Guardian website for most recent information and further explanation: <http://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-with-children-check>

11.1 Child-related Work

Child-related work is:

- providing services for children and young people under 18;
- where work normally involves being face-to-face with children;
- where contact with children is more than incidental to the work.

11.2 Regulations for Employers

Employers must:

- Register with WWCC online as an employer at: www.ocg.nsw.gov.au
- Establish whether a WWCC is necessary for the position being filled, and may not ask for one if it is not required

Exemptions

There are specified exemptions from the Working With Children Check under Part 4, Clause 20 of the *Child Protection (Working With Children) Regulation 2013* (NSW).

People covered by the exemptions are not required to have a WWCC. (Check details on website)

- Verify the WWCC status of every proposed employee before hiring them to ensure they have a clearance or a completed application for a WWCC. It is an offence for an employer to not verify workers in child-related work without a reasonable excuse. (Section 9A)
- Maintain an up-to-date record of verification of workers' WWCC status, including:
 - full name; date of birth;
 - WWC number; verification date; verification outcome; expiry date;
 - paid or volunteer worker

- Remind employees to renew their WWCC (can be done up to 3 months prior to expiry)
- Verify the Check status of employees when they renew their WWCC, no later than 5 working days after the expiry date of each clearance.
- Provide information in response to a request from the Office of the Children's Guardian relevant to assessment of whether a person poses a risk to the safety of children (Section 31 of the *Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012* (NSW))
- Remove from child-related work any worker whose WWCC is barred/ interim barred/ not found/ closed/ or expired. (see 11.5)

11.3 Compliance for Employees in Child-related Work

- All employees are required to have a current WWCC clearance
- A child-related employee or volunteer is responsible for applying for his or her own WWCC.
- Child-related workers must have a WWCC clearance before commencing employment.
- All volunteers, including a parent or close relative, are required to have a WWCC clearance if their role involves: attending an overnight camp; formal mentoring; or intimate personal care of a child with a disability (See subclause 20(2) of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013* (NSW))
- All WWCC applicants are required to notify the Office of the Children's Guardian of any changes to their personal details within 3 months of the change. (Section 36B)
- Applicants for renewal of their WWCC should check for any new requirements (e.g. proof of identity documents) in sufficient time. Applications for renewal can be made 3 months before expiry.

11.4 Results of a Check

- If the worker receives a WWCC, the WWCC is valid for five years and may be used for any child-related work in NSW.
- Cleared applicants will be subject to ongoing monitoring for relevant new records which could lead to a bar and the clearance being revoked before the five-year expiry date.
- Barred applicants must not engage in any child-related work (paid or unpaid). It is an offence for them to do so and penalties apply.
- It is an offence to hire a barred worker for child-related work. Where an employer reasonably knows that the person is a barred worker or poses a risk to children it may also be a criminal offence in light of section 43B of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW).

11.5 WWCC status

Application in progress - A WWCC application is being processed and the applicant may work with children.

If the applicant becomes barred, the school will be contacted and advised on what to do next.

Cleared - This applicant has a WWCC clearance that is valid until the listed expiry date. The applicant may work with children.

Barred - The applicant has been barred from working with children and it is an offence to engage this person for child-related work.

Interim barred - The applicant has been barred from working with children during the course of a risk assessment. It is an offence to engage this person for child-related work.

Not found or Closed- The database cannot find a matching WWCC.

Expired - The person's WWCC has not been renewed by them.

If the outcome of your online verification of a worker is:

- barred
- interim barred
- not found
- closed
- expired

The School cannot employ them to work with children – paid or unpaid.

11.6 Records considered in the WWCC

A WWCC includes a national police check and review of findings of misconduct involving children.

New Working with Children Check laws now in force will create further protections for children. Changes to laws mean that the NSW Working with Children Check can now access information held on a national database of people barred from working with children. This database, known as the National Reference System, has been established by the Australian Government and is operated by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC). One of the strengths of the NSW Working with Children Check is that it's underpinned by ongoing, continuous monitoring of new records, Children's Guardian Janet Schorer said. 'This new measure brings continuous checking nationwide where we are informed of new record that can result in a person being barred from working with children. 'Now, all applicants and holders of a NSW Working with Children Check will be continuously screened at a national level through the National Reference System,' Ms Schorer said. The changes also mean that heads of organisations under the Child Safe Scheme must now have a Working with Children Check clearance. This is because leaders should model the actions expected of their staff. Additional changes have come into effect that will further strengthen the NSW Working with Children Check scheme by ensuring that NSW applicants or clearance holders will be automatically barred from working with children for a range of serious animal cruelty offences. We have agreements with RSPCA NSW and the Animal Welfare League for sharing animal cruelty information to support this change. First published 1 Sep 2022

11.7 Renewal of Check

- Workers will receive notice from the Office of the Children's Guardian to renew their WWCC three months before it expires
- Workers are responsible for applying and renewing their own WWCC
- No notification will be sent to employers
- Employers have responsibility for verifying the status of WWCC

11.8 Notification of 'Barred' Status

- (a) An 'interim bar' may be applied to a worker pending due process of an investigation.
- (b) If a worker becomes barred, the employer will be contacted, using details provided during the online verification process.

Only the worker's barred status will be shared with the employer. Details of work or criminal records will NOT be shared.

- (c) Notification will be sent by letter, addressed to the individual who verified the worker. The letter will outline the legal implications of a barred status and the action required by the employer.
- (d) If the school receives a letter advising that a current employee or volunteer has become barred, the senior executive must immediately remove the person from child-related work. It doesn't matter whether they are paid or unpaid; supervised or unsupervised.

The employer's options are:

- dismiss the worker
- suspend them from child-related work pending the outcome of an appeal
- transfer them to a non-child-related role within the business (although there is no legal obligation to find an alternative position for a barred worker).

The school should seek legal advice prior to dismissing the worker.

- (e) The school shall keep a record of all correspondence, advice received and action taken in relation to notification of a worker's WWCC status.

12 Confidentiality

12.1 Confidentiality

- (a) All persons involved in an investigation must maintain a high level of confidentiality to protect the integrity of any investigation.
 - All parties should be advised of the need for confidentiality.
 - Only parties with a need to know about any complaint or allegation should be informed of it.
 - It may, in some circumstances, be inappropriate to advise the accused person of the identity of the person making the allegation.
- (b) Staff who have access to information regarding:
 - students suspected to be at risk of harm
 - allegations of reportable conduct by a staff member
 - details of any investigation into a complaintare to observe strict confidentiality in relation to the entire matter unless required by the Principal or by law to disclose that information.
- (c) Access to records shall be restricted to authorised staff only.
- (d) The school shall treat any breaches of confidentiality as a matter for possible disciplinary action.

12.2 Privacy

- (a) At all stages of reporting and investigating a concern it is essential that:
 - the student's right to privacy and confidentiality is respected;
 - the anonymity of the notifier is maintained;
 - the rights of any person implicated in the allegation are respected;

- where the accusation is of a criminal nature the legal principle of *presumption of innocence* of the accused must be maintained.
- (b) All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individual involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety; or if the information is required to be disclosed to another agency by law.

13 Documentation

13.1 Record Keeping

- (a) Accurate documentation must be kept by all parties concerning:
- All complaints and allegations, not just those deemed reportable.
 - Reports made of any case where a student is suspected to be at risk of harm, including:
 - details of any complaint, allegation or notification;
 - actions taken by the school as a result of such notification; and
 - any other details related to the report.
 - All details relating to any investigation undertaken by the Principal, or authorised investigator

13.2 Records to be Maintained

- (a) **In relation to a mandatory report:**
- Reports made to the Principal about possible risk of harm to a child, any decisions made and action taken
 - Details of any notification to DCJ – Mandatory Reporter Guide summary
 - Details of any feedback or requests from DCJ following notification
 - Any actions taken by the school in relation to a notification.
 - Communications/ reports to or from other agencies

- (b) **In relation to an allegation of Reportable Conduct**

Documentation shall include the process, decisions, action taken or not taken and reasons for decisions and actions; and shall be provided to the Office of the Children's Guardian:

- The allegation (as accurately/ close to verbatim as possible)
- The school's initial response to the person making the allegation, the alleged victim/s and the employee who is the subject of the allegation
- Notifications considered or made to other agencies
- Reports from other agencies
- Investigation plan
- Initial risk assessment and management
- Decisions about the employee; action in relation to child/ren or employee
- All interviews – questions & responses; location; who was present; start and finish times

- Decisions during and at end of investigation – rationale, name & role of decision-maker, date
- Personal contact, discussion, emails etc – date, details, questions, advice, outcomes; name of person making contact, details of position/ agency; reason for contact
- Summary report – allegation, investigation process (detailing procedural fairness), findings in relation to allegation & rationale
- Final risk assessment – including final decision about employee and the factors considered; any subsequent action taken or to be taken
- Communications to employee, alleged victim and parents, other agencies

(c) **In relation to WWCC**

Employers are required to keep records of child-related workers which include:

- Full name and date of birth
- Working With Children Check number
- Date and outcome of the Check verification
- Expiry date

These records may be electronic or in hard copy format, and must be made available if required for audit and monitoring purposes.

Separate WWCC files and WWCC Registers are maintained for employees and for volunteers.

13.3 Retention

- (a) Records pertaining to mandatory reports shall be maintained indefinitely.
- (b) Records pertaining to reportable conduct or allegations shall be maintained indefinitely.

WWCC records are kept during the period an employee carries out child-related work for at least 7 years afterwards.

13.4 Security

- (a) All records shall be stored securely.
- (b) Records of complaints or allegations shall be maintained separately to the employee's personnel file but will be referenced therein. For example, any outcomes impacting the employee's work will be recorded in their personnel file.
- (c) Access to records is restricted to authorised staff members only.
- (d) Monitoring - The school's records shall be monitored regularly to ensure compliance with the requirements of regulators and school procedures.

14 Information Sharing

- (a) Schools are required to exchange information relating to a child or young person's safety, welfare or well-being (see Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and*

Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)). This provision overrides restrictions of disclosure under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

Where a prescribed body presents a request for information:

- Identification must be presented
- Request should identify what information is sought

- (b) A prescribed body is any organisation specified in subsection 248(6) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) and includes registered non-government schools.

The term also includes: police; government department; government schools; public health organisation; any other organisations that have direct responsibility for, or supervision of, the provision of healthcare, welfare, education, children's services, residential services or law enforcement to children

Note:

- Information that is not associated with the welfare of children must not be shared; nor information which may be prejudicial to an investigation, or endangering a person, or is not in the public interest (see subsection 245D(4) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) for a complete list of circumstances where the school is not required to comply with a request)
- The reporters details cannot be exchanged without their permission, unless allowed by law
- It is not essential to obtain consent where it may further jeopardise the child's safety, welfare or wellbeing – best practice is to keep all parties informed throughout the process
- Written exchange is preferred or written record of verbal exchange
- Information share should be stored securely on file

- (c) The Care and Protection Act also requires that reasonable steps are taken to co-ordinate decision making and service delivery regarding children and young people.

- (d) Note: Ambulance officers are required to notify Police if a student is removed from the school for an injury which is the result of assault.

15 Evidence

EVIDENCE of COMPLIANCE
Staff Code of Conduct; Staff Training
Volunteers
Contractors
Records
GENERAL – all agencies
Initial report/ complaint / allegation
Preliminary investigation - General
Inform Principal
Notification - DCJ / helpline/ Police/ CEN/ OCG/ DET/ NESA
School's initial response (all persons)
Advice/ feedback from agency
Risk assessment
School investigation Y/ N-reason
External investigation
Information shared – schools/ police etc
Copies of documents (evidence)
Personal contact/ emails/ date/ time/reason
Further info requested/ provided
DCJ – Mandatory Reporting
Mandatory report guide result
Failure mandatory reporting
Action/ Report
Correspondence/ records
Office of Children's Guardian Reportable Conduct
Initial Report (7 business days)
Final or interim report (30 calendar days)
Records
Investigation
Office of the Children's Guardian – Working with Children Check
Recruitment/ induction paperwork (HR 1-2 Recruitment)
Verification WWCC no's
Currency
Notification of 'barred' received
Action following 'bar' / correspondence