

PROTECT Reporting Obligations Procedures

Identifying and responding to signs of child abuse

Emmanuel College (ECW) operates with the consent of the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat and is owned, operated, and governed by Mercy Education Ltd (MEL).

The care, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people is a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education. All school staff have a responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect children and young people under their care and supervision from harm or injury that is reasonably foreseeable.

These procedures take into account relevant legislative requirements within the State of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian [Child Safe Standards](#) as set out in [Ministerial Order No 1359](#). Mercy Education Ltd (MEL), as governing authority, and the Principal have direct responsibility for ensuring the requirements of the Ministerial Order are met within the school.

The procedures are designed to enable staff at Emmanuel College to comply with the Child Safe Standards, including [Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused](#). The procedures should be read in conjunction with the MEL/ECW Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and School Procedure, the MEL Code of Conduct, and the MEL Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting Policy.

It is critical for school staff to be able to recognise the physical or behavioural signs of child abuse, and to know the Four Critical Actions that must be followed to meet their legal obligations for reporting all incidents, suspicions, and disclosures of child abuse. Failure to report physical and sexual abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

The [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) is a joint protocol between the Department of Education and Training (DET), Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA), and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV). Staff at Emmanuel College must act and follow the Four Critical Actions if they witness an incident, receive a disclosure, or form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has, or is at risk of being abused.

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse can take many forms. The perpetrator may be a parent, guardian, carer, school staff member, volunteer, another adult, or even another child. The nature of child abuse is complex. The abuse may occur over time and potential risk indicators are often difficult to detect. Therefore, the legal obligations for reporting allegations of child abuse can vary depending on the circumstances of the incident.

Child abuse is defined in the [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#) to include:

1. Sexual offence
2. Physical violence
3. Grooming
4. Serious emotional or psychological harm
5. Family violence
6. Serious neglect

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical, social, psychological, or emotional health, development, and wellbeing. The younger the child, the more vulnerable they are to abuse and the more serious the consequences are likely to be.

There can be physical or behavioural indicators of child abuse and neglect, or a combination of both. While the presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not necessarily prove that abuse or neglect has occurred, the repeated occurrence of either a physical or behavioural indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert school staff to the possibility of child abuse or neglect.

Child sexual abuse is more commonly perpetrated by someone who is known to and trusted by the child or young person and is also often someone highly trusted within their family, community, school, and/or other institutions, such as the Church.

For further details on the types of child abuse, a comprehensive list of the indicators of harm, and advice on identifying perpetrators of child sexual abuse, refer to the [PROTECT information on identifying child abuse](#).

BECOMING AWARE OF A CHILD ABUSE INCIDENT

There are four main ways in which staff may become aware that a child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse. In each circumstance, staff must act and follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

- 1. Witnessing an incident:** if staff witness an incident where they believe a child has been subjected to, or may be at risk of, abuse, including exposure to family violence, they must first take immediate action to protect the safety of the child or children involved and then refer to the Four Critical Actions for Schools.
- 2. Forming a suspicion or reasonable belief:** all suspicions that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being abused must be taken seriously, including suspicions that the abuse is taking or may take place outside school grounds or areas. If suspicion develops into a reasonable belief staff must act and refer to the Four Critical Actions for Schools.
- 3. Receiving a disclosure about or from a current student:** all disclosures must be treated seriously, and staff should immediately refer to the Four Critical Actions for Schools.
- 4. Receiving a disclosure about or from a former student:** if a disclosure about historical abuse is received from a former student currently of school age and attending a Victorian school, staff must immediately refer to the Four Critical Actions for Schools. If the former student is no longer of school age or attending a Victorian school, staff must still report the disclosure to [Child Protection](#) at the Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing (DFFH).

Notes and records

Staff are required to keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures, and allegations of child abuse and should use the [PROTECT templates](#) to do this. Even if a staff member decides not to make a report, they must still accurately document their notes relating to the incident, disclosure, or allegation of child abuse using the PROTECT templates. Notes and records must be kept securely on school grounds and must not be destroyed as they may be needed at a later time.

Disclosures

It is the role of staff to reassure and support a child or young person who makes a disclosure of abuse, and to ensure that the disclosure is taken seriously. However, staff should never promise to keep any disclosures confidential, as all disclosures of abuse must be reported. The role of staff remains the same if disclosures are made by a parent, guardian or carer, or a sibling, or if disclosures involve family violence.

For further details, refer to the [PROTECT information on strategies for managing a disclosure](#).

FOUR CRITICAL INCIDENTS FOR SCHOOLS

Staff at Emmanuel College must follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) for responding to incidents, disclosures, and suspicions of child abuse.

[ACTION 1: Respond to an emergency](#)

This first step is only applicable if a child has **just been abused** or is **at risk of immediate harm**. If this is not the case, go straight to Action 2: Report to Authorities. If the child has just been abused or is at risk of immediate harm, staff must take reasonable steps to protect the child, including:

- Separating the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring that if the parties involved are all present at the school, they are supervised separately by another staff member.
- Arranging and providing urgent medical assistance where necessary, including administering first aid or calling 000 for an ambulance.
- Calling 000 for urgent Police assistance if the person who is alleged to have engaged in the abuse poses an immediate risk to the health and safety of any person.

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

ACTION 2: Report to authorities

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

Once immediate health and safety concerns have been addressed, the staff member must take steps to report the incident, suspicion, or disclosure of child abuse as soon as practicable. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence (refer to [failure to disclose](#)).

There are different reporting procedures depending on the type of abuse, and whether the source of the suspected or alleged abuse comes from within the school or within the family or community of the child. In all cases, staff must report internally to the Principal or, if the Principal is involved in the allegation, the [Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd \(MEL\)](#).

Additionally:

- Where the source of the abuse comes from within Emmanuel College, that is, the suspected or alleged abuse involves a staff member, volunteer, allied health professional, contractor, or visitor to the school, it must be reported to Victoria Police.
- Where the suspicion, belief, or disclosure relates to sexual abuse or grooming, it must be reported to Victoria Police.
- Where the source of the abuse comes from within the family or community and is not sexual abuse or grooming, it must be reported to [DFFH Child Protection](#).

The [Four Critical Actions](#) require all school staff to report all incidents, suspicions, and disclosures of abuse as soon as possible to the relevant authorities.

Reasonable belief

A reasonable belief or a belief on reasonable grounds is not the same as having proof but is more than rumour or speculation. A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

The DFFH and Department of Education and Training (DET) have deliberately set a low threshold for the formation of a “reasonable belief” to enable authorities to investigate and take action.

A reasonable belief might be formed if:

- a child or young person states they have been physically or sexually abused
- any person tells a staff member they believe someone has been abused, including a child who is talking about themselves
- physical or behavioural indicators of abuse are observed in a child or young person, as described in the [PROTECT information on identifying child abuse](#)
- a child or young person exhibits sexually abusive or age-inappropriate behaviour(s).

Refer to the [PROTECT information on forming a reasonable belief](#) for further details.

Mandatory reporting

Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) to protect children from harm relating to physical injury and sexual abuse. A child, for the purpose of the relevant parts of this Act, is any person who is under the age of 17 years.

In Victorian schools, registered teachers, school principals, early childhood workers, registered psychologists, school counsellors and all people in religious ministry are mandated to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities. The report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and it is a criminal offence not to report in these circumstances.

A subsequent report must be made on each occasion on which the mandatory reporter becomes aware of further reasonable grounds for the belief and even if the reporter knows that another report has been made concerning the same child and suspected abuse.

Staff, volunteers, contractors, and other service providers who are not mandatory reporters still have a professional and moral (and sometimes legal) obligation to report a child abuse incident, disclosure, or suspicion by following the [Four Critical Action for Schools](#).

The threshold for reporting child abuse incidents, disclosures, concerns, or suspicions has been set deliberately low by the Four Critical Actions for Schools joint protocol. Refer to the [PROTECT information on mandatory reporting](#) for further details.

Steps for making a mandatory report

The steps below describe the information to include when making a mandatory report about child abuse. If a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm, contact Victoria Police immediately.

1. Keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include:

- a description of the concerns (eg physical injuries, student behaviour)
- the source of those concerns (eg observation, report from child or another person)
- the actions taken as a result of the concerns (eg consultation with the Principal, report to DFFH Child Protection).

The [PROTECT templates](#) should be used to record notes.

2. Discuss concerns with the Principal or member of the College Management Team or Wellbeing Team, the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL), or if the Principal is involved in the allegation, the [Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd \(MEL\)](#). While this is not a legal requirement, it is recommended due to the complexity of child abuse incidents, disclosures, and suspicions, and will help to ensure support is provided to all involved. The confidentiality of these discussions must be maintained.

The person raising the concerns should then make their own assessment about whether they are required to make a report about the child or young person and to whom the report should be made. It is important to remember that the duty to report abuse or suspicions of abuse exists, even if the Principal or member of the College Management Team, or a representative from the DOBCEL or MEL advises against proceeding with reporting suspected abuse.

3. Gather and document the relevant information necessary to make the report, including:

- full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person
- details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns
- the person making the report involvement with the child or young person
- details of any other agencies which may be involved with the child or young person.

The [PROTECT templates](#) should be used to collect and document as much information as possible to make the report to either Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection. It is critical that completing the template does not impact on reporting times. If a child is in immediate danger, staff need to report the matter to Victoria Police immediately.

4. Make the report. Concerns which are life-threatening should be reported immediately by phoning 000 or calling the [local Police station](#).

Where the source of the abuse comes from within Emmanuel College, that is, the suspected or alleged abuse involves a staff member, volunteer, allied health professional, contractor, or visitor to the school, it must be reported to:

- the Victoria Police, who will contact DFFH Child Protection when appropriate
- the Principal or member of the College Management Team or Wellbeing Team, or if the Principal is involved in the allegation, the [Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd \(MEL\)](#).

Where the source of the suspected or alleged abuse comes from within the child's family or community, it must be reported to:

- the Victoria Police for sexual abuse and grooming
- the [DFFH Child Protection](#) where the child is considered to be in need of protection due to child abuse, or that they have been, are being or are at risk of being harmed due to any form of abuse, including family violence (call the Child Protection Emergency Service on 13 12 78 if after hours)
- the Principal or member of the College Management Team or Wellbeing Team.

5. Document written records of report, including:

- the date and time of the report, and a summary of what was reported
- the name and position of the person who made the report, and the person who received the report.

The information initially recorded in the [PROTECT template](#) and any additional information provided to either Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection must be stored securely and maintained indefinitely by Emmanuel College to ensure that records are accessible upon request by external authorities investigating the matter.

Student sexual offending and problem sexual behaviour

Student sexual offending means sexual behaviour by a student 10 years and over which may amount to a sexual offence. A sexual offence includes rape, sexual assault, indecent acts, and other unwanted sexualised touching. For more detailed definitions and information refer to [PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#).

Under Victorian law, children between 12 to 15 years of age can only consent to sexual activity with another child no more than two years older (therefore sexual contact by a student with a child outside of this age range may be student sexual offending).

In order for a person to consent to sexual activity, they must have the capacity to understand the context and possible consequences of the act. Therefore, sexual contact by a student involving a person with a cognitive impairment or affected by alcohol or other drugs may be student sexual offending.

Staff must act by following the [Four Critical Actions: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#) and mandatory reporting procedures as soon as they witness an incident, receive a disclosure, or form a suspicion that a student is a victim of student sexual offending and/or a student has engaged in sexual offending.

For student sexual behaviours, it is important to remember that staff have a duty of care towards all students involved, including the alleged victim, the child alleged to have engaged in the offending behaviour, and any other students who may have been affected.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

The [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) was created under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) and requires the head of an organisation to notify the [Commission for Children and Young People \(CCYP\)](#) if an allegation of reportable conduct is made against one of its employees.

Employees at Emmanuel College include the Principal, teachers, administration or learning support assistants, Advisory Council members, contractors, volunteers, allied health professionals, and religious leaders. Employees could also include former staff.

The head of organisation is responsible for compliance of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, however will be supported by the Principal. The head of organisation for Emmanuel College is the [Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd \(MEL\)](#). Any allegation of reportable conduct must be reported to the Principal or a member of the College Management Team for immediate action.

There are five types of reportable conduct:

- sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

A reportable allegation means any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, whether or not the conduct or misconduct is alleged to have occurred within the course of the person's employment.

Reportable conduct may also include historical reportable allegations. Refer to the [Reportable Conduct Scheme information sheets for further information on historical allegations](#).

The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not change mandatory reporting or other reporting obligations, including internal reporting and reporting criminal behaviour to Victoria Police. Reportable conduct reporting should be done in addition to these other reporting obligations.

The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) also enables a school, as a prescribed [Information Sharing Entity \(ISE\)](#), to share confidential information with other ISEs to promote child wellbeing or safety, where legislated requirements are met.

Steps for making an allegation of reportable conduct

The steps below describe the information to include when making an allegation of reportable conduct.

1. Keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include:

- a description of the concerns (eg physical injuries, student behaviour)
- the source of those concerns (eg observation, report from child or another person)
- the actions taken as a result of the concerns (eg consultation with the Principal, report to DFFH Child Protection).

2. Make the report as soon as a person forms a reasonable belief that an employee at Emmanuel College has engaged in reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct. The allegation must be reported to the Principal, or if the Principal is involved in the allegation, the [Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd \(MEL\)](#).

Steps for the Principal when there is an allegation of reportable conduct

The information below describes what steps the Principal of Emmanuel College must take if there is a potential reportable allegation. These steps are in general order of priority, but the guidance may change depending on the circumstances. In all cases, reportable allegations must be referred to the Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd (MEL) at email contact@mercy.edu.au or phone 03 9977 3870.

- 1. Ensure the child or young person is safe.** This should always be the first step, along with contacting Victoria Police on 000 if the child or young person is considered to be in immediate danger or risk of harm.
- 2. Listen and offer support.** When speaking with a child or young person, it is important to remember that if they have decided to speak to someone, there is a level of trust in place.
 - give full attention to the child or young person
 - listen calmly and empathically
 - reassure the child or young person that it is right to tell
 - accept the child or young person will disclose only what they are comfortable disclosing and recognise the bravery/strength of the child for talking about something that is difficult
 - let the child or young person take their time and use their own words
 - Do not make promises that cannot be kept.

When speaking with another adult who informs of a reportable allegation:

- thank the person for bringing the reportable allegation to attention and offer them support and assistance as necessary
- if the person is a staff member, refer them to [Converge International](#), the College's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at phone 1300 687 372.

- 3. Explain what will happen next** to the child or young person. Or if the person making the report is another adult, explain that the school will manage the concern confidentially and, to protect all parties, they should not discuss the matter.
- 4. Make a record of the allegations.** The [PROTECT templates](#) can be used for recording notes, or a detailed diary entry. If a staff member, or parent, guardian, or carer, or other adult was present, ask them to make a record as well.
- 5. Consider if the matter needs to be referred to Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection.** If necessary, report the matter in accordance with the [PROTECT information and advice on how to identify and report signs of abuse](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).
- 6. Notify the child's parents, guardians, or carers** (if relevant), and follow the [PROTECT information and advice on how to identify and report signs of abuse](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).
- 7. Notify the Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd (MEL)** as the head of organisation.

The Chief Executive Officer and Principal may seek advice and support from others to ensure MEL and Emmanuel College comply with the obligations of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Others include legal services and the Child Safety Manager at the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL).

8. **Notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)** if the matter does involve a reportable allegation. The Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd (MEL) is responsible for delegating this task.
9. **Conduct a risk assessment** to determine any measures that should be put in place to manage the person against whom allegations have been made, and to protect the child or young person against whom reportable conduct may have occurred.

Where it is believed there is an incident of reportable allegation, it is important **to not**:

- say or do anything to suggest to the student that anyone doubts them or make them feel ashamed to have revealed the allegation
- start investigating the allegation, including unnecessarily questioning the student or speaking with the person who is the subject of the allegation, without conducting a risk assessment. Otherwise, it may put the student, the employee, the school, or the investigation at risk.

An investigation into a reportable allegation is a workplace investigation aimed at gathering and examining information to establish facts and make findings in relation to allegations of child abuse against an employee. In Catholic schools an investigation is undertaken in conjunction with Clause 13 of the Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement (CEMEA) 2022.

The Orange Door

If a staff member believes a child or young person is not subject to abuse, including family violence, but still holds significant concerns for the child or young person's wellbeing (eg risk-taking behaviour, parenting difficulties, isolation from family or lack of support), they must still act. This may include making a referral to or seeking advice from The Orange Door.

[The Orange Door](#) provides help for people experiencing family violence, or who need assistance with the care and wellbeing of children and young people. It brings services together as a partnership so that individuals and families do not have to go to multiple services or to retell their story multiple times to have their needs met. Services available at The Orange Door include risk and needs assessment, safety planning, and crisis support. The Orange Door is a free service and teams are located in sites across Victoria.

A report should be made to The Orange Door if:

- there is significant concern for a child or young person's wellbeing
- there are concerns about circumstances that have a low-to-moderate impact on a child or young person
- a child or young person's immediate safety is not compromised
- a referral has been discussed with the child or young person's parents, guardians, or carers, and all parties are supportive of this decision.

If it is felt the child or young person's parents, guardians, or carers would not be supportive of the referral, or the child is partaking in any risk-taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child or others, the matter may be referred to DHHS Child Protection.

When unsure of what action to take in response to any concerns about a child or young person, advice should be sought from the Principal or member of the College Management Team or Wellbeing Team. Advice may also be sought from DFFH Child Protection or The Orange Door.

Refer also to the [PROTECT information and advice on how to protect children, create a child safe environment, and identify and report signs of abuse](#).

Making additional reports

Where a staff member has made a report and continues to suspect that a child or young person is at risk and in need of protection, or if they have made further observations, they should continue to record and report on each separate occasion where a belief has been formed, on reasonable grounds, that a child is likely to be at risk and in need of protection. Additional reports should use the same format as outlined above.

If there is any suspicion that this relates to a sexual offence involving a person over 18 and a child under 16, it must be reported to Victoria Police. Failure to report physical and sexual abuse may amount to a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).

Where a staff member is aware that another staff member has formed a reasonable belief about the same child on the same occasion, or based on the same indicators of abuse, and has made a report to the appropriate authority, the first staff member need not make a further report. However, if the first staff member has formed a reasonable belief of abuse or a significant risk of abuse to the child based on different observations, further indicators or additional information, a further report must be made to the appropriate authority detailing this additional information.

Failure to report

The three criminal offences introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) are as follows:

Failure to disclose offence: any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to Police. Failure to disclose the information to Police is a criminal offence.

Failure to protect offence: the offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision, or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation.

A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Grooming offence: this offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

ACTION 3: Contact parents, guardians, or carers

Where it is suspected that a child or young person at Emmanuel College has been or is at risk of being abused, it is critical that parents, guardians, or carers of the child are notified as soon as practicable after a report is made to the authorities. The school must always seek advice from Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection to ensure that it is appropriate to contact the parents, guardians, or carers.

In circumstances of family violence, staff of Emmanuel College should:

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

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

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

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

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

For detailed guidance on how to have this conversation with a parent, guardian, or carer, refer to [PROTECT information on advice for communicating with parents](#).

ACTION 4: Provide ongoing support

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

The Fit4Life framework and Wellbeing Team are critical to supporting students and to promoting a child safe environment at Emmanuel College. Support includes:

- developing and implementing whole of school curriculum that promotes child safety and wellbeing
- regularly communicating with children and young people and their parents, guardians, carers where appropriate
- where appropriate convening a student support group of school wellbeing staff and relevant teaching staff to plan, support, and monitor affected students
- developing student support plans if required for students impacted by the incident to ensure appropriate levels of care and support are provided depending on their involvement.

The Wellbeing Team works with a range of external services to provide additional support to students at Emmanuel College, including family violence services such as The Orange Door, The Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA), Headspace, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Where external authorities are investigating a report of abuse or risk of abuse, it is the role of the Principal to ensure that students are supported throughout interviews at the school. For more information on this topic, refer to the [Department of Education and Training \(DET\) guidelines on Police and child protection interviews](#).

Emmanuel College and governing body Mercy Education Ltd (MEL) have a duty to provide support to staff who have witnessed an incident or disclosure, or who have made a report to external authorities about a reasonable belief of child abuse. It is important to remember that some staff may have also experienced child abuse (including family violence) or be experiencing family violence and abuse in their own lives.

Staff requiring wellbeing support can contact the College's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, [Converge International](#).

Information to support Victorian Catholic schools in understanding their obligation to employees and to provide suggestions of how to assist employees experiencing family and domestic violence can be found on the Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA) website under the guidelines for family and domestic violence.

The school should conduct a review of the reporting process four to six weeks after a report has been made to identify if any follow-up support actions are needed. Refer to the review process guidelines in the [PROTECT templates for responding to suspected child abuse](#).

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF MAKING A REPORT

Confidentiality

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child or young person or parent, guardian, or carer of the report
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed
- a court or tribunal decides that it is necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child
- a court or tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to provide evidence.

Professional protection

If a report is made in good faith:

- it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter
- the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.

Interviews

DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the school without their parent, guardian, or carer's knowledge or consent.

- Interviewing children and young people at Emmanuel College should only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the best interests of the child to proceed in this manner.
- DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the Principal or a member of the College Management Team or Wellbeing Team of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.
- When DFFH Child Protection workers/police officers come to the school premises, the Principal or a member of the College Management Team or Wellbeing Team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.
- When a child or young person is being interviewed by DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the child or young person.

For more information about interviews, refer to the [Department of Education and Training \(DET\) guidelines on Police and child protection interviews](#).

Support for the child or young person

The roles and responsibilities of the Principal or other school staff in supporting children and young people who are involved with DFFH Child Protection may include, acting as a support person for the child or young person, attending DFFH Child Protection case planning meetings, observing and monitoring the child's behaviour, and liaising with professionals.

Requests for information

DFFH Child Protection and/or The Orange Door and/or Victoria Police may request information about the child or family for the purpose of investigating a report and assessing the risk to the child or young person.

In certain circumstances, DHHS Child Protection can also direct Emmanuel College staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the child. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DFFH Child Protection. Refer to the [PROTECT information on child protection privacy and information sharing](#).

Witness summons

If DFFH Child Protection makes a protection application in the Children's Court of Victoria, any party to the application may issue a witness summons to produce documents and/or to give evidence in the proceedings.

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

Emmanuel College may receive complaints or concerns about staff management of a child abuse incident. These complaints or concerns may be voiced by parents, guardians, carers, or others within the school community. The [Complaints and Grievances Policy](#) will be followed in such instances.

As a first step, it is important to ensure a complaint does not raise concerns that child abuse or a risk of child abuse has gone unreported. If this is the case, staff should follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) to ensure that any new information received through a complaint or concern from a member of the school community is reported to authorities where required.

SCHOOL CONTACTS

Principal

Peter Morgan

Child Protection Officers

Michael Wrigley, Deputy Principal

Claire Wrigley, Assistant Principal – Students

Rachele Sloane, Student Wellbeing Coordinator

Head of Organisation

Louisa Rennie, Chief Executive Officer, Mercy Education Ltd (MEL)

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL)

Tim O'Farrell, Secondary Consultant

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL)

Jacinta Cook, Manager: Child Safety

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)
Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

RELATED DOCUMENTS/LINKS

[Four Critical Actions for Schools – Responding to Incidents, Disclosures, and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#)

[Four Critical Actions for Schools – Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)

MEL/ECW Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

MEL/ECW Child Safety and Wellbeing School Procedure

MEL Education Code of Conduct

MEL Child Safety and Wellbeing (governance) Policy

MEL Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting (governance) Policy

ECW Reportable Conduct Scheme Overview

[VCEA \(formally CECV\) Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)

VCEA guidelines for family and domestic violence

[Complaints and Grievances Policy](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Ministerial Order No 1359](#)

[Child Safe Standards](#)

[DET Child Protection and Child Safe Standards \(PROTECT\)](#)

[DET Guidelines on Police and child protection interviews](#)

[Commission for Children and Young People \(CCYP\)](#)

[Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

[Child Information Sharing Scheme](#)

[The Orange Door](#)

[DFFH Child Protection](#)

[Converge International – Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)

COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT RESOURCES

[Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum](#)

[DET Respectful Relationships](#)

[Safe+Equal](#)

[Safe Steps](#)

[1800RESPECT](#)

[Centre Against Sexual Assault \(South Western CASA\)](#)

[Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children’s Hospital](#)

[Kids First](#)

[Australian Childhood Foundation](#)

[Djirra](#)

[Child Wise](#)

[Headspace](#)

REVIEW HISTORY

Version	Date released	Next review	Author	Approved
1.0	May 2020	May 2022	Principal's Assistant*	Board of Management
2.0	February 2022	April 2022	Principal's Assistant	College Leadership Team Advisory Council
3.0	September 2022	September 2024	Principal's Assistant	College Leadership Team
4.0	May 2024	May 2026	Principal's Assistant	College Leadership Team

* DOBCEL and MACS original templates used to develop these procedures