



Learning For Life

Child Protection Policy

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to provide written processes about the health and safety of Parklands School's staff and students, as well as the appropriate conduct of the School's staff and volunteers. All children have a right to feel safe and to be protected from harm all of the time and Staff Members owe a 'duty of care' to all students at the School. Schools have a special responsibility to protect children when they are on school premises and also to intervene when they believe the welfare of a child is at risk outside the School.

Background

Parklands School is committed to the care, safety and protection of all children attending our school.

Parklands School takes a proactive and preventative stance on child protection and promotes a child safe environment. This is done by creating a positive culture based on values of respect and high regard for the well-being and safety of all children at all times. It is also expressed in the role modelling and behaviour of all staff and volunteers. Finally it is done through embedding these values in the policies and procedures and management practices throughout the organisation.

This document explains the actions to be taken by staff to protect children in circumstances where abuse is suspected or when allegations of child abuse are made against staff, children or other people in the community. Procedures for reporting sexual abuse are made in accordance with the mandatory reporting legislation.

The child safety agenda is in a constant process of monitoring and review. The Governing Board is kept informed of risk assessment and any child protection issues through the cycle of policy reviews at the Board level.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that children's rights to be safe are maintained and that each child is protected from physical, sexual, emotional, psychological abuse, neglect, family or domestic violence or exploitation.

Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Parklands School Community. This includes students, teachers, grounds staff, bus drivers, parents volunteering their services and third parties invited to run an excursion or incursion.

It covers information about the reporting of child abuse or neglect and mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse.



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Legislation

- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Criminal Code Act (1913)
- Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006 (changes to s204B of The Criminal Code)*
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004

* The Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006 is the legislation Western Australia that protects children under the age of 16, or that the offender believes is under the age of 16, from an adult who uses electronic communications with the intent to procure the child to engage in sexual activity; or to expose the child to engage in sexual activity; or to expose the child to any indecent matter.

Definitions

Child Abuse and Neglect

This is maltreatment of a person under the age of 18 years. It is the result of action or inaction on the part of a person who has responsibility to care for a child resulting in harm or injury to the child. The harm may include delayed physical and/or intellectual development. The maltreatment experienced is normally described in five categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators.

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Neglect

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child has experienced severe and/or persistent ill-treatment. It can include, but is not limited by injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and fractures caused by a range of acts including beating, shaking, illicit administration of alcohol and other drugs, attempted suffocation, excessive discipline or physical punishment.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, belittling, teasing, humiliating, bullying, confusing, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to have a reduced capacity to experience a range of emotions, to express emotion appropriately and to modulate their emotional experience. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to be fearful, withdrawn and/or resentful, distressed and despairing.



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Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse covers a wide range of behaviour or activities that expose or subject a child to sexual activity that is exploitative and/or inappropriate to his/her age and developmental level. These behaviours include observation or involvement with inappropriate fondling of a child's body, making a child touch an adult's genitalia, showing pornographic material or sexual acts to a child, and sexual penetration of the child. Harm from sexual abuse may include significant emotional trauma, physical injury, infections and impaired emotional and psychological development.

Psychological abuse

Psychological abuse is the sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, isolating, neglecting, discrediting, misleading, disregarding, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement. This abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, attention, imagination and moral development. Children are likely to feel worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered or only of value in meeting another's needs.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a parent/caregiver to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. These include adequate supervision, adequate food or shelter, suitable clothing, effective medical, therapeutic or remedial care and emotional security. Neglect can be acute, chronic or episodic, and can result in detrimental effects on the child or young person's social psychological, educational or physical development and/or physical injury. Neglect should be considered in the context of physical, emotional or psychological abuse.

Policy

Parklands School Principal, Staff and Volunteers will abide by the Children and Community Services Act 2008 and any amendments to this Act to safeguard the right that all children have to feel safe at school and in the community. Children are valued, and their opinions are encouraged and listened to by all staff.

All staff have an important role in the identification and reporting of child abuse and the provision of support and assistance to children who have been abused. Child protection and the prevention of child abuse is a shared community responsibility. This policy recognises that the best interests of children will be met by collaborating with or engaging the expertise of other government agencies or non-government departments in accordance with existing protocols.

- **Recruitment and Selection Practices**

The School is diligent about thorough screening, training and supervision process through the police clearance activated as part of the Teachers Registration Board requirement and the Working with Children legislation. The recruitment and selection practices are also applied to volunteers and contractors. The Principal must confirm that all Parklands School employees, volunteers, visitors and external providers in child-related work have applied for or hold a valid Working with Children Check.

- **Teacher Registration & Working With Children Check**

All teaching staff are required, through the Teacher Registration Board (TRB), to have a police clearance. The Working with Children (WWC) legislation requires them to have a WWC Check.



All non-teaching staff are also required to have a WWC Check if their usual duties involve contact with children.

Volunteers who are not parents and have contact with children are also required to have a WWC Check and a National Police Clearance. Volunteers who are parents are exempt from getting a WWC Check, unless, on an overnight camp. However, those who take a professional role in the School are required to have National Police Clearance and/or WWC Check.

- **Child Protection Professional Learning**

All teaching and non-teaching staff who have contact with children must complete the Child Protection professional learning program. At recruitment stage, the School confirms evidence of Mandatory Reporting Training. The School will provide relevant training if it has not previously been completed. This means that on Induction, staff will be advised about the Child Protection Policy. During the employment period, they will be required to attend refresher courses about updates on Mandatory Reporting for Child Abuse and Grooming and the non-mandatory reporting for all other forms of abuse.

- **Protective Behaviours Curriculum**

Parklands School implements the “Keeping Safe” protective behaviour curriculum for all students. This program is part of the health and wellbeing curriculum, delivered through the Health and Physical Education curriculum.

Protective behaviours are part of the school curriculum, so that students are empowered to recognise and report abuse, understand power in relationships, and develop seeking help and other appropriate protective strategies. It is important that all members of the school community are focused on preventing the opportunities for all forms of abuse.

- **Confidentiality**

School staff who have access to information regarding suspected or disclosed child abuse have a clear obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality in relation to the entire matter and an obligation to ensure that this information is kept secure.

- **Protocols**

It should be noted that it is a Policy of the School that:

- staff members are not alone with individual students in areas where they cannot be seen by other staff members or students;
- staff members to not use their private vehicles to transport students without the permission of the Principal; and
- staff members do not invite students to their homes, nor visit them in their homes, without the permission of the Principal.



Procedure

- Staff meet fortnightly and discuss the wellbeing and safety of students regularly. This includes noting attendance records and engagement and wellbeing.
- A Staff Code of Conduct is read and signed by every new staff member and volunteer prior to working in the school.
- All staff recruitment includes thorough checking of legislative requirements, character and reference checks, and includes values- based interviewing by a panel.
- Regular communication is made with parents, staff and others about processes necessary to ensure the protection and safety of all children.
- A regular review cycle of related policies will include Behaviour Management, Duty of Care, Attendance, Parents and Student Concerns and Complaints, and Bullying Policies.
- Parklands will provide training to all staff regarding Child Protection which includes instruction in delivery of the “Keeping Safe” curriculum. This curriculum provides comprehensive and age-appropriate information related to personal safety, understanding about power in relationships and strategies for seeking help to all students from Pre-Kindergarten to Year Six.
- A letter will be sent to families each year informing them of this curriculum and the mandatory reporting requirements for all teachers, with the intention to keep all students safe both at school and in the community.

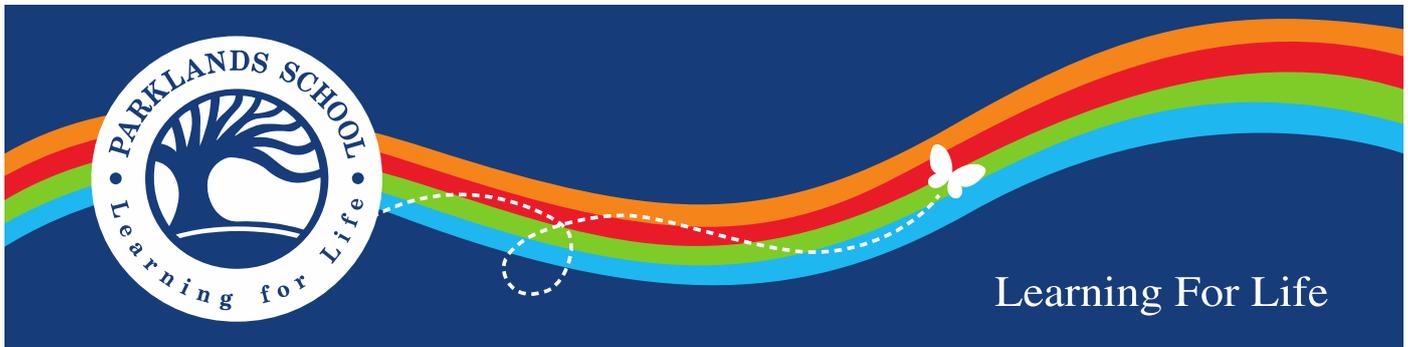
Response to disclosure of abuse or neglect

Whilst all care and support is to be given to the student making a disclosure, staff cannot agree to a student’s demands for confidentiality or requests that parents, police or other agencies not be informed when the welfare or safety of the student or other students may be threatened.

All strong concerns for the welfare of children believed maltreated by parents/caregivers are to be discussed with CPFS or the Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit before advising parents/caregivers. These agencies will then decide on the provision of advice to parents/caregivers and any further action.

When responding to disclosure, staff may consider the following responses:

- Use ‘protective interrupting’ if students begin to disclose in class or in a public area to protect them from sharing the information with too many other people;
- Establish clear limits on confidentiality by telling the child that a report will be made to a person who will be able to provide help and protection and that you will help them throughout the process;
- Provide reassurance that you believe them, that it is right to tell and do not think that they are to blame or make judgements about what has happened;
- Listen to students in a private location within the school;
- Be supportive and understanding;
- Be empathetic to student feelings;
- Acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such things;
- Let students tell the event in their own words;
- Once you have established that they have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed, do not pursue the conversation any further. This is important to ensure that questions cannot be raised later about possible manipulation of the disclosure;



- Stay with the student after the disclosure to provide a sense of security and explain what will happen next.

Document the conversation that you have had remembering as accurately as you possible, as well as the subsequent discussions and actions. Victims of abuse and neglect can be supported by the school through an appropriate management plan formed in consultation with the Department for CPFS.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse

In Western Australia, the mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse are the following professions in both the government and non-government sectors:

- doctors
- nurses
- midwives
- teachers
- police officers
- boarding supervisors.

Mandatory reporters must report a belief, based on reasonable grounds in the course of their work, that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring.

A mandatory reporter can form the necessary belief, based on reasonable grounds, by noting the presence of indicators, disclosures, injuries, signs, symptoms and behaviours that heighten concerns about child sexual abuse.

Teacher assistants, school chaplains and school psychologists are examples of people who work with children in schools that are not mandated reporters. However, all people working with children, whether mandatory reporters or not, should continue to report reasonable beliefs about all forms of abuse.

Once a teacher has formed a belief based on reasonable grounds, they are required to make the report to the Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support (DC-CPFS) and they may advise the Principal of the report. Prior to forming a belief, the teacher may, if they wish, consult with colleagues with specialist knowledge, for example, the principal, psychologist, school counsellor.

Confidentiality – in cases of child sexual abuse, the legislation provides protection for the person reporting. Disclosure of the reporter's identity or identifying information to parents or any other party can incur a fine of \$24,000 and two years' imprisonment.

In the case of sexual abuse and a Mandatory Report being made, the reporter will receive a letter advising them of the District Office it has been referred to, or whether or not no further action was recommended by the Mandatory Reporting Service.

How does a mandatory reporter make a report?

There are two ways to make a report - verbal or written.



A verbal report is preferred in the first instance, particularly if the teacher has formed a belief that the child is still at risk of being abused, as it allows the Mandatory Reporting Service to respond quickly, ask clarifying questions and gather as much information as possible. However, it must be followed by a written report as soon as is practicable, usually within 24 hours. To make a verbal report, the Mandatory Reporting Service can be reached on 1800 708 704.

Failure to follow up a verbal report with a written report as soon as is practicable may result in a fine of \$3,000. A written report form can be downloaded from the mandatory reporting website www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au.

Once the report has been lodged, the Mandatory Reporting Service will assess the immediate risk to the child, and determine the need for further child protection assessment and investigation. A copy of the report is sent to the WA Police. The police determine if they need to be involved on a case by case basis.

The mandatory reporter will receive a feedback letter advising them of the CPFS District Office it has been referred to, or whether no further action was recommended by the Mandatory Reporting Service.

Note: Cross Reference- Mandatory Reporting Policy.

Summary of Mandatory Report Procedure

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse – MANDATORY REPORT	
IF	THEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are a mandated reporter (or staff member who is not a teacher) and you have reasonable suspicion, you <u>may</u> consult with the Principal or colleague with specialist knowledge e.g. psychologist, school counsellor specialist, and then, if you form a belief, based on reasonable grounds, that sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must make a verbal or written report to the Mandatory Reporting Service (DC-CPFS), open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as per the procedure outlined in the next point.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are a staff member (mandated reporter or teacher assistant, school chaplain, psychologist, or any other staff member who is not a teacher) and you are aware through a student’s disclosure that sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must make a verbal or written report to the Mandatory Reporting Service DC-CPFS), open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A verbal report to 1800 708 804 is preferred in the first instance, especially if the child is still at risk of being abused. Follow up within 24 hours with the written report to the Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support. Email: mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au Fax: 1800 610 614 Post: PO Box 8146, Perth BC, WA 6849



Reporting Child Sexual Abuse – MANDATORY REPORT

IF	THEN
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DC-CPFS will forward reports to the WA Police • The person lodging the report will receive an acknowledgment of receipt – keep this document. • The mandatory reporter will receive a feedback letter advising if any further action is to be taken. • You must then provide a copy of the written report to the Principal. The reporter’s name can be redacted within the report to preserve confidentiality.
You are a Principal and receive a verbal report from a staff member about child sexual abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must instruct the staff member to make a verbal or written report to the DC-CPFS. • You must lodge a Critical Incident Report with DES.

Recognition & Suspicion of Physical, Emotional/Psychological Abuse or Neglect

A student may disclose information about abuse or neglect, either privately or publicly. A staff member may perceive there is a concern or believe they have evidence of abuse or neglect.

The staff member may confidentially consult with a colleague, e.g. teacher, school chaplain or school psychologist, before they make formal notification to the Principal or Board Chair.

A staff member who observes or becomes aware through a child’s disclosure of physical, emotional or psychological abuse or neglect must report concerns to the Principal or Board Chair.

Confidentiality is paramount and the staff member must not investigate child abuse or neglect matters.

Reporting Physical, Emotional/Psychological Abuse or Neglect

Reporting Physical, Emotional or Psychological Abuse, or Neglect – NON-MANDATORY REPORT	
IF	THEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are staff member and perceive there is a concern or believe the student is affected by abuse or neglect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may confidentially consult with a colleague e.g. teacher, school chaplain or school psychologist, before making formal notification to the Principal or Board Chair
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are a staff member and you are aware through a student’s disclosure, or you observe that a student has been affected by physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must report the concerns to the Principal or Board Chair. See Appendix 1 Template • Do NOT investigate the child abuse/neglect • Keep the matter confidential and make brief notes about the incident including dates, the



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Reporting Physical, Emotional or Psychological Abuse, or Neglect – NON-MANDATORY REPORT

IF	THEN
	<p>nature of the indications or disclosure, and action taken. Place in a sealed envelope marked “Confidential – Principal”. The record will be placed on the student file in the Administration Office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note ** - if staff email to advise a report on a student is being sent to the Principal, the email should advise “A confidential Child Protection Report for a Year X student has been sent to the Principal by XXXXXXX on this date”.
<p>You are a Principal and receive a report of physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forward all reports of such abuse to the Department of Communities on 1800 273 889. Note name and position of Duty Officer. Maintain a written record of communication and subsequent actions. DC-CPFS will advise further action in relation to parents/caregivers and any further action. DC-CPFS decide how to progress the matter and must provide feedback to people making reports. Arrange for ongoing support for the Staff member, student and anyone else affected. You must lodge a Critical Incident Report with DES.

Student Disclosure in Private

If a student discloses a situation of abuse to a Staff member, their role is to reassure the student and support the student in their decision to disclose. They must reassure the student that they have a right to feel safe.

The Staff Member is not responsible for investigating his or her suspicions or the child’s disclosure and the minimum amount of information is to be collected. Other agencies or individuals have this responsibility.

It is not easy for students to disclose abuse or neglect as they may previously have been coerced, bribed or threatened into secrecy. They may need repeated reassurance that they are believed and it was right to tell.

Sometimes students will try to elicit a promise that a Staff member not tell anyone about the disclosure. Do not make this promise. If this happens, it is important to explain that you have concerns about their safety and that you have to take action to ensure that they will be protected from further abuse.

Note: A disclosure can often arouse strong feelings in the person to whom the disclosure is being made. Such reactions may include shock, anger and helplessness. It is important for the staff member to be aware and in control of these feelings and ensure that they are dealt with following the disclosure.



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Student Disclosure in Public – Protective Interruption

It is possible that a student may start to disclose in class or with a group of other students. If disclosure begins in a public arena it is important to use the strategy of protective interrupting:

- acknowledge that you have heard the student and stop them disclosing any further, be supportive and gently indicate that they may want to talk to you about it in a more private situation;
- quietly arrange to see the student as soon as possible, away from other students;
- do not allow other children or adults to ask questions or make judgments.

A teacher's or other staff member's role is to listen actively to what the student is saying but to not push for details.

Staff Member concern

Perceived concern: if a Staff Member suspects or perceives abuse or neglect may be occurring they should discuss the matter with the Principal.

In all cases sexual abuse must be reported.

Evidence based concern: If the Staff Member's concern is serious and/or based on evidence they must report immediately to the Principal. **In all cases sexual abuse must be reported.**

Reporting Following a Disclosure

Once disclosure has been made, the Staff Member needs to determine the student's immediate need for safety and to consider the emotional state of the student. The staff member needs to:

- ensure the student is safe in the immediate future;
- refer the student to a psychologist/counsellor as soon as possible;
- in some cases it is not appropriate for the student to be left alone after a disclosure. This will depend on the severity and nature of the abuse.

Documentation

At the earliest opportunity (within 24 hours) the Staff Member must write brief notes about the incident including dates, the nature of the indications or disclosure, and the action taken. These should be placed in a sealed envelope marked "Confidential – Principal". The Principal will place this report in the student's file in the Administration Office. Ensure that any records made before reporting and while waiting for initial concerns or suspicions to be supported, remain confidential.

In the case of sexual abuse a written report must follow within 24 hours. This should be completed on a Mandatory Report form by the reporter and will be forwarded to the Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support. The person lodging the report will receive an acknowledgment of receipt – it is important to retain this document. The mandatory reporter will receive a feedback letter advising if any further action is to be taken.



Further Action

Once you have reported the situation further action rests with the Principal who will:

- Contact the local Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support (DC-CPFS)
- Contact parent or parents (if advised by DC-CPFS)
- Place the report on the student’s file in the Administration Office

In some cases the situation may be seen as a family issue that may be best dealt with by contact with the family in the initial stages and this will be after the Principal has sought advice from DC-CPFS or the Police, prior to informing the parent/carer of a concern of abuse or neglect.

Where the perpetrator of the abuse is not a parent or family member it is appropriate for the parents to be informed as soon as possible and involved in the support of the student. Generally the Principal will make this contact.

The Principal is responsible for dealing with all incidents involving former students.

Debriefing

It is imperative for staff wellbeing that after a disclosure, she or he seeks an opportunity to talk to someone as soon as possible e.g. a psychologist. Staff must be mindful that the issues of confidentiality are paramount to protect the student.

Monitoring of Policy

This Child Protection Policy is evaluated on an annual basis. Staff are advised of revisions and updates to the policy and it is their responsibility to be aware of all changes.

School Community Awareness

This Policy is published on the School Website and Skoolbag App. The Policy is also published in the Parent Handbook. School newsletter reminders are sent to parents to keep them informed of the policy procedures to be implemented in the event that abuse is suspected or has occurred.

Indicators of Possible Child Abuse and Neglect

Sexual Abuse	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genital or anal bleeding • Signs of pain or discomfort in the genital or anal areas • Pregnancy • Unexplained difficulty in walking or sitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure of involvement in sexual activity • Inappropriate interest or knowledge of sexual matters • Reports of sexual assault or inappropriate behaviour to a staff member • Changes in academic performance



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Physical Abuse	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained bruises and welts, particularly on face, lips, mouth, back, torso, or on several different body parts • Shaped or linear bruising • Unexplained burns shaped or linear • Unexplained fractures • Injuries in various stages of healing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of adults, particularly parents • Behavioural extremes, withdrawn or aggressive • Afraid to go home • Reports of injury from child • Changes in academic performance

Emotional Abuse	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech disorders • Failure to thrive • Lags in physical development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habit behaviours not consistent with developmental stage • Conduct disorders, destructive, violent • Behavioural extremes • Changes in academic performance

Neglect	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent hunger • Unattended physical or medical problems • Inadequate clothing • Abandonment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant fatigue • Developmental delays • Changes in academic performance

Breach

If employees breach this Policy, employees may be subject to disciplinary actions. Failure to make a mandatory report can incur a government imposed penalty of up to \$6,000 by the Department of Communities – Child Protection & Family Support.

