

CHILD ABUSE (INCLUDING GROOMING) – IDENTIFICATION AND RESPONSE



PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures our school has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child safety and child abuse (including grooming) and to ensure staff use the [4 Critical Actions](#) to identify and respond to child abuse, including grooming, based on the source of abuse and are aware of and comply with their reporting and legal obligations, including mandatory reporting and reportable conduct obligations, to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school (physical and online).

DEFINITIONS

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- physical violence inflicted on a child
- sexual offences committed against a child
- grooming of a child by an adult
- family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include student to student incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating (including electronic communications) and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

School staff member

For the purpose of this policy a school staff member includes a contractor engaged by the school or school council to perform child-related work.

Reportable conduct includes:

- A sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Sexual misconduct committed against. With or in the presence of a child
- Physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- Significant neglect of a child

POLICY

Frankston Heights Primary School understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse. We have a range of policies and measures in place to prevent child abuse from occurring at our school or during school activities.

Everyone at Frankston Heights Primary School has an important role to:

- prevent child abuse (including grooming) in our school or during school activities
- identify and respond to concerns of child abuse using the 4 Critical Actions – based on the source of abuse:
 - [by an adult engaged by the school](#)
 - [between students](#)
 - [in the family](#)
 - [in the community](#).

Frankston Heights follows the Department of Education policies on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Child abuse \(including grooming\) – identification and response](#)
- [Student to Student Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour](#)
- [Reportable and Notifiable Conduct policy](#).

Frankston Heights Primary School has other policies that are part of our child safety framework and describe actions we take to ensure students are safe and feel safe to raise a complaint. These include:

- Child Safety Policy and Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy.

Refer to these policies on our school website.

Procedure for responding to an incident, disclosure, or allegation of child abuse

All staff at our school must use the 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse. The 4 Critical Actions are:

- Identify child abuse
- Support students in the school
- Refer student to community services
- Report abuse to authorities.

At all times all staff must:

- [Respond to an emergency](#)
- [Adapt to changing circumstances](#)
- [Document their actions](#).

All staff must follow the [4 Critical Actions](#) - based on the source of abuse:

- [4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse by an adult engaged by the school](#)
 - Any allegation, complaint, disclosure or concern of abuse (including grooming) by an adult engaged by a school may be reportable conduct under Victoria's [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) and **must be reported**.
- [4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to student-to-student abuse](#)
 - As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by another student **you must act**.
- [4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse in the family](#)

- As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by someone in the family **you must act**.
- [4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse in the community](#).
 - As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by someone in the community **you must act**.

Our school follows detailed guidance on the [4 Critical Actions](#) for each source of abuse on the [PROTECT website](#). This includes guidance on how to [respond to a disclosure](#) of child abuse made by a student or young person in a trauma-informed way and provide appropriate support, including suggested language to use.

To ensure the 4 Critical Actions are followed, staff must immediately notify one of our school's relevant child safety nominated contacts on becoming aware that a student is, or may be, experiencing child abuse (including grooming).

Our child safety nominated contacts are listed in the table below. Our school's child safety nominated contacts work with staff and school leadership to provide oversight and ensure:

- child safety concerns are taken seriously
- the school's response is prompt and thorough
- the relevant 4 Critical Actions and PROTECT guidance are followed.

Anyone can contact these staff about a child safety concern. This includes students, parents/carers, volunteers, or anyone else in the school community who has concerns about child abuse including grooming.

Role	Name	Phone
Assistant Principal	Jodi Craig Jodi.craig@education.vic.gov.au	9783 4988
MARAM Nominated staff	Jodi Craig Jodi.craig@education.vic.gov.au	9783 4988
Wellbeing Leader	Philippa Varszeghy Philippa. Varszeghy@education.vic.gov.au	9783 4988
Principal	Ricky Joyce Ricky.joyce@education.vic.gov.au	9783 4988

Escalating concerns

Following the 4 Critical Actions ensures that our staff take all the necessary steps where there is a concern about abuse, including grooming. If any staff member is concerned that these processes have not been followed, they must:

- raise their concerns with the principal and escalate to the regional office via [1800 338 663](tel:1800338663) or email enquiries@education.vic.gov.au if they remain unsatisfied
- report concerns to the appropriate authorities (e.g. Victoria Police or Child Protection) in line with the 4 Critical Actions.

Reporting concerns about child safety contacts or school leadership

To report any allegations or concerns of abuse including grooming about a listed child safety contact, notify the principal.

To report any allegations or concerns of abuse including grooming by a principal, please contact:

- Department of Education
 - Anyone can contact the Department of Education.
 - Email: enquiries@education.vic.gov.au
 - Phone: 1800 338 663
 - For more information see: [Report abuse if you're a current student](#).
- Department of Education Speak Up service

- Staff can use the Speak Up service to report improper conduct, fraud or corruption (including to make an anonymous report) or other improper conduct.
- Website: <https://www.pkftalkintegrity.com/?det>
- Email: educationspeakup@pkf.com.au
- Phone 1800 633 462.

Meeting our legal obligations

Our staff must take reasonable steps to minimise risks of harm to students in their care that is reasonably foreseeable. For further information see: [PROTECT child safety frameworks and legal obligations](#).

Further information on relevant child safety frameworks and legal obligations is in **Appendix 1**.

COMMUNICATION

[Under Ministerial Order 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards, the procedures referred to in this policy must be made publicly available.

This policy will be communicated to our school community. It may be:

- published on our school's website
- included in staff induction processes and annual staff training
- communicated to the school community through school newsletters or our electronic student management system
- included in volunteer induction processes and training for relevant volunteers
- discussed in annual staff briefings or meetings
- included in staff handbook

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following Department of Education policies and guidance are relevant to this policy:

- [PROTECT](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Reportable and Notifiable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Child abuse \(including grooming\) – identification and response](#)
- [Student-to-student abuse and harmful sexual behaviour](#)
- [Managing and Reporting School Incidents](#)
- [Duty of Care](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	July 2026
Consultation	School Council – July 2026 Education subcommittee – July 2026 School Community (via Sentral) – August 2026
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	July 2028

APPENDIX 1: CHILD SAFETY FRAMEWORKS AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

This policy ensures compliance with child safety frameworks and our legal obligations and our school's duty of care obligations. These include:

Child Safe Standards: Victoria's Child Safe Standards help schools create and maintain a child-safe organisation and protect children and young people from harm and abuse. All Victorian schools and school boarding premises must comply with Ministerial Order 1359. Ministerial Order 1359 sets out the actions schools must take to implement the Child Safe Standards.

Reportable Conduct Scheme: The Reportable Conduct Scheme is a child safety mechanism that provides central oversight of how organisations respond to allegations of reportable conduct by a person engaged by the school.

Information sharing: Victorian schools can share confidential information under the Information Sharing Schemes, including the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS). Under CISS, schools can share relevant information about any person to promote the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children. Under FVISS, schools can share relevant information to assess or manage risk of family violence.

Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management for family violence (MARAM): MARAM sets a consistent, shared approach across Victoria's service system to identify and respond to family violence. The FVISS enables schools to meet their obligations under MARAM.

Mandatory reporting: If a mandatory reporter, while doing their job, forms a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical and/or sexual abuse and
- the child's parents have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type

this must be reported to Child Protection as soon as practicable.

Failure to disclose offence: All adults must report to Victoria Police if they have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child in Victoria.

Failure to protect offence: The offence applies 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.

Further information about these legal obligations is available from:

- [Child Safety Frameworks and Legal Obligations](#)
- Department of Education Policy and Advisory Library:
 - [Child abuse \(including grooming\) – identification and response](#)
 - [Reportable and Notifiable Conduct](#)