

suspected child abuse, as well as the requirements for responding to allegations of suspected abuse.

This includes any act committed against a child/young person involving:
a sexual offence
grooming
physical violence
serious emotional or psychological harm
serious neglect.

A sexual offence occurs when a person involves a child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to the child's age and development. Sexual offences are governed by the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.). Sexual abuse can involve a wide range of sexual activity and may include fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exploitation through pornography or prostitution.

Grooming refers to predatory conduct undertaken by an adult (18 years or over) to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. It is a sexual offence under section 49M of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.).

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways including beating, shaking, burning or using weapons (such as belts and paddles). Physical harm may also be caused during student fights.

Serious emotional or psychological abuse may occur when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or the witnessing of family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological harm could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Neglect includes a failure to provide a child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision. Significant neglect causes harm to a child that is more than trivial or temporary. Serious neglect is when the child is exposed to an extremely dangerous or life-threatening situation and there is a continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life

Family violence is defined under the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic.) to include behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness or be exposed to the effects of family violence such as abusive, threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour. While family violence does not form part of the official definition of 'child abuse' in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*uraging a child to engMeW*nB055@05/F1 dM@T.(r)5(ag)4i)4n)5(g)0 595.3 82.04eW11 0 0[F

A report of an incident, disclosure or suspicion made by a person who is not subject to a mandatory reporting obligation.

Person(s) who is not subject to a mandatory reporting obligation but who holds professional, moral (and sometimes legal) obligations to report a child protection incident, disclosure or suspicion.

When a person is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, he/she must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as

A child/young person exhibits sexually abusive or age-inappropriate behaviour(s);
Professional observations of the child/young person's behaviour or development (refer to _____) cause you to form a belief that the child/young person has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused.

It is important to understand that the presence of a number of indicators that suggest either physical or sexual abuse of a child/young

context of any alleged sexual behaviour of students, taking into consideration their developmental age and cognitive functioning, so that an informed decision about appropriate action can be made.

The DET resource titled *PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending* includes procedures and guidance on:

Defining Student Sexual Offending

Knowing Your Obligations

Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending.

These procedures must be applied in any circumstance where there is an incident, allegation or you form a suspicion that a student is victim to a student sexual offence and/or a student has committed a sexual offence. This includes suspected offences that have taken place outside of school grounds and hours.

The key obligations of staff in relation student sexual offending are reproduced here from the DET resource:

As a school staff member, you must act as soon there is an incident or allegation or you form a suspicion that a student is victim to student sexual offending and/or a student has committed student sexual offending.

You must act even if you have not directly observed the student sexual offending (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the student sexual offending).

If you are unsure whether a behaviour (or suspected behaviour) constitutes student sexual offending, you should seek further advice and follow the Four Critical Actions.

You must also act if you form a reasonable belief that a student's sexual offending is a result of underlying child abuse by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Suspected Student Sexual Offending and the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

You should make sufficient enquiries to form a reasonable belief and to determine a child's immediate needs. However, once a reasonable belief has been formed, it is not your role to investigate. This is the role of DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

OLMC staff must report their concerns of student sexual offending to the Principal and Child

If the child/young person has just been abused or is at risk of immediate harm, you must take reasonable steps to protect the child/young person, including:

- separating the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring that if the parties involved are all present at the College, they are supervised separately by a 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 incident has occurred at the College, staff should also ensure that reasonable steps are taken to preserve the environment, the clothing and other items, and to prevent any potential witnesses (including school

you and College support personnel have discussed the referral to Child FIRST/The Orange Door with the parents/carers of the child/young person, and all parties are supportive of this decision.

Where you believe that the parents/carers of the child/young person will not be supportive of the referral, or the child/young person is partaking in any risk-taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature, you may refer the matter to DFFH Child Protection.

1. If a staff member believes there is reasonable grounds to make a report to an external authority, they are strongly advised to discuss this belief with the relevant College support personnel, and to continue to inform them of developments. The support personnel at OLMC are the:

Principal
Head of Student Wellbeing (Child Safety Officer)
Student Counsellors.

It is important to note, however, that a staff member can make a report without the prior knowledge of the Principal or other College support personnel.

2. If more than one staff member

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

Advice from Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection may depend on a number of factors, such as:

- The parents/carers of the child/young person are alleged to have engaged in the abuse (including in circumstances of suspected family violence)

- A disclosure to the parents/carers may result in further abuse to the child/young person

- The child/young person 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/carers not be notified – the school should insist that another responsible adult is notified in lieu of the parents/carers

- The notification of parents/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/carers should be notified promptly. Guidance on how to have this conversation with a parent or carer are presented in Section 3 of *PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools*.

In circumstances of family violence, the College will:

- take care not to inadvertently alert the alleged perpetrator by notifying parents/carers as it could increase risk of harm to the child/young person, other family members or school staff

- seek advice from DFFH Child Protection or Child FIRST/The Orange Door before alerting parents/carers about safe strategies for communicating with a parent/carer who is experiencing family violence.

OLMC staff members who witness a child protection 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 protection matter to ensure that they feel supported and safe at the school. Schools also play a critical role in building students' 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.

Support provided to students at OLM includes:

- regularly communicating with the student and their parents/carers where appropriate
- convening a Student Support Group of school wellbeing staff and teachers to plan, support and monitor affected students

- developing Student Support Plans for students impacted by the incident (depending on their involvement) to ensure appropriate levels of care and support are provided.

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 College. The Principal will be guided by the policies and guidelines of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS), in particular *School Guidelines 2.19a: Police and DFFH Interview Protocols*.

OLMC

It is important to note that staff members may have also experienced child abuse (including family violence) or be experiencing family violence and abuse in their own lives. OLMC staff members requiring wellbeing support can contact the College's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider.

Staff are encouraged to refer to [SIMON/Knowledge Banks/Child Safety](#) for the following key resources:

PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools

PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending

PROTECT: Reporting Suspected Child Abuse Template

Guidelines: How to Make a Mandatory Report

1. Legislative Context: Sources of Child Protection Reporting Obligations
2. Indicators of Child Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Family Violence, Neglect and Grooming
3. Four Critical Actions (Overview) - Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse
4. Four Critical Actions (Overview) - Responding to Student Sexual Offending
5. How to Make a Mandatory Report
6. Reporting Allegations of Reportable Contact
7. Reporting Authorities: Contact Information

Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct

Mercy Education Ltd & OLMC Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

Mercy Education Ltd & OLMC Privacy Policy

Child Safety: Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy

Counselling Services Policy

Complaints Resolution Policy

- Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations
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CHILD WELLBEING AND SAFETY ACT 2005 (VIC.)

Reportable Conduct

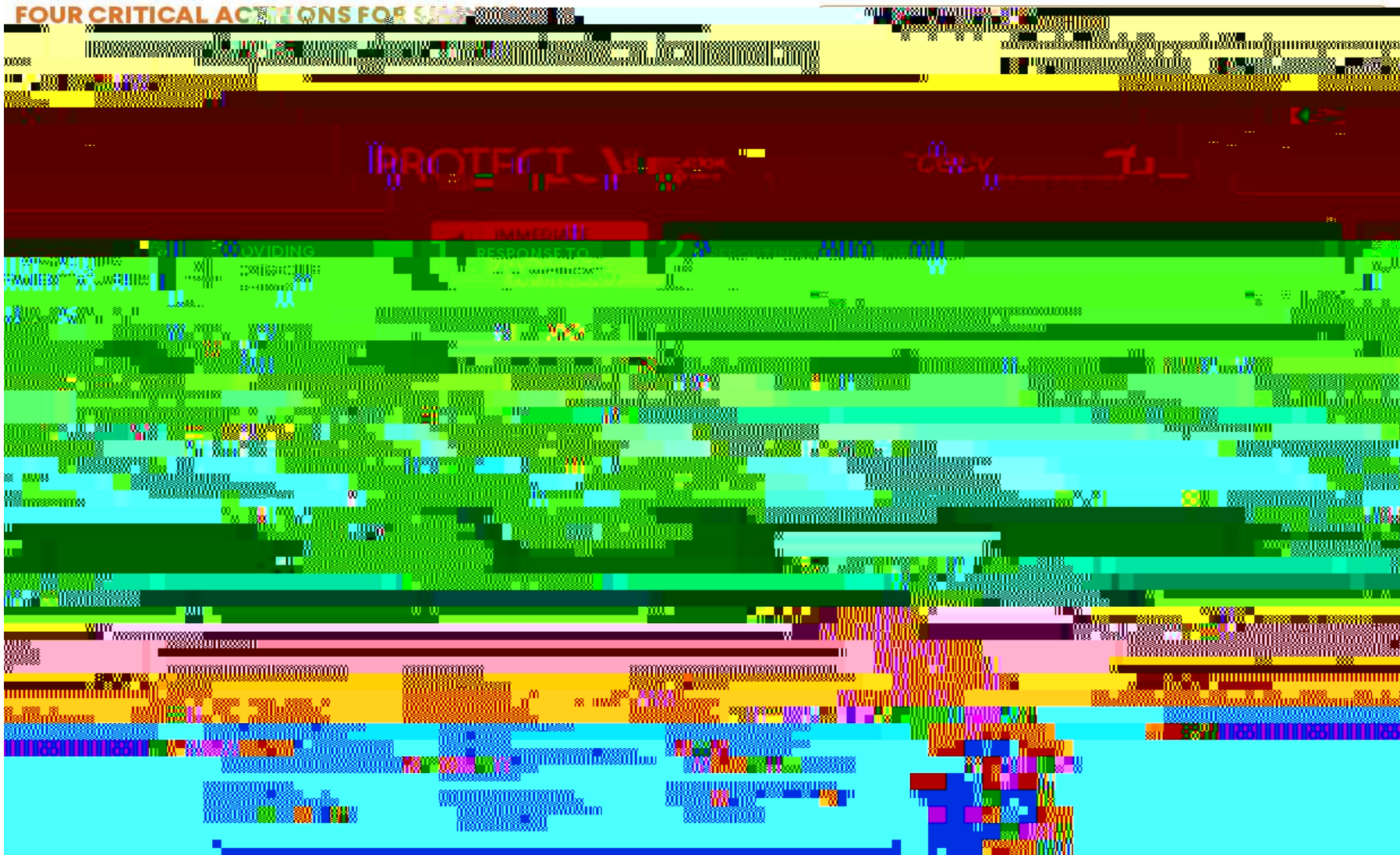
CRIMES ACT 1958 (VIC.)

failure to disclose offence

failure to protect offence

grooming offence





How to Make a Mandatory Report

mandatory report



	<p>Where the source of the abuse comes from within the College, that is, the suspected or alleged abuse involves an OLMC staff member, volunteer, allied health practitioner, officer/office holder, contractor or visitor at the school:</p> <p>contact Victoria Police, which will contact DFFH Child Protection when appropriate</p> <p>report internally to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Principal, or the Leadership Team if the Principal is involved in the allegation - Mercy Education Limited (MEL). <p>Where the source of the suspected or alleged abuse comes from within the child's family or community, you must:</p> <p>report sexual abuse and grooming to Victoria Police</p> <p>report the matter to DFFH Child Protection if you consider the child 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. If after hours, call the Child Protection Emergency Service on 13 12 78</p> <p>report internally to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Principal, or a member of the Leadership Team if the Principal is unavailable.

Make a written record of

Reporting Authorities Contact Information

OLMC is located in the DHHS Northern and Western Intake Region. The Office of Child Protection in this region is located at:

679- 685 High Street
Preston 3072

000 or Heidelberg Police Station	(03) 9450 8000
Student Incident and Recovery Unit	(03) 9651 3622
Employee Conduct Branch	(03) 9637 2595
Sexual Offences Child	