

### *VCC is a Child Safe School*

## VCCP6.31 Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct – Creating a Child Safe Environment

### 1. RATIONALE

We recognise that, in a world affected by sin and human inadequacy, the protection of children is both a significant concern of the school and is required under relevant government legislation. We believe that the family unit is the best place for the care of children; so the restoration of a family that is dysfunctional is the most desirable long-term solution to remedy and prevent child neglect or abuse. However, we must recognise the fact that some children can be endangered by abusive or neglectful family circumstances and by the undesirable actions of individuals beyond the family setting that cannot or will not respond to assistance or advice soon enough to protect the children. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the best interests of the child remains paramount and are protected in a manner which is respectful to all.

### 2. SCOPE

This Child Protection Policy has been developed in line with **VCCF12.8 - Child Protection Code of Conduct** which will also be issued and signed by all College Staff Members at the commencement of each school year or upon induction which will be placed into the employee's file. Before commencement of employment or engagement with the College, or as soon as practicable thereafter, all College Staff Members shall ensure that they read, understand and sign **VCCF12.8 - Child Protection Code of Conduct**.

This Policy is intended to:

- a) Guide staff, volunteers and students on how to behave with students in the College.
- b) Clarify the parameters of appropriate and inappropriate conduct for staff and volunteers of the College in order to create a safe and supportive environment for students in accordance with the College's mission and values and the Christian commitment we embrace.
- c) Model a contemporary workplace at the College that is faith-filled, collaborative, consultative, and lawfully compliant in relation to contemporary child protection practice.

The Policy is underpinned by relevant legislation and industrial instruments as outlined in **Section 4 - Legislation**. In the event of any conflict between this Policy and the legislation, the provisions of legislation take precedence. This Policy applies to all persons engaged to work in, or to provide services to, the College and its students.

The College will:

- ensure that all College Staff Members who will have direct contact with students will be informed annually of their legal responsibilities related to child protection, mandatory reporting and other relevant College expectations
- ensure that requirements to notify and investigate allegations of reportable conduct in compliance with the **Children's Guardian Act 2019** will be made known to the College Staff Members
- ensure that the College will comply with the requirements of the **Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012** in relation to working with children check clearances for all persons in child-related work at the College as required
- ensure that evidence of working with children check clearances is maintained by the College for all persons in child-related work at the College as required under the **Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012**
- respond to reportable matters in accordance with legislative requirements
- ensure that all College Staff Members who are mandatory reporters under the **Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998** will be informed annually of their obligations and the process that the College will have in place in relation to mandatory reporting

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### 3. RELATED POLICIES / DOCUMENTS

- *VCCP6.11 - Excursion Policy*
- *VCCP5.3 - Workplace Health and Safety Policy*
- *VCCF12.8 - Child Protection Code of Conduct*
- *VCCF12.81 - Child Protection Report Form*

### 4. LEGISLATION / REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Child protection legislation has been enacted by every state and territory of Australia. This legislation sets out legal and regulatory requirements around the interaction with students, the care of students, and the reporting of conduct of concern. The principal legislation is set out in:

- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*
- *Children's Guardian Act 2019*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*
- *NSW Working with Children Check:* <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check>
- *NSW Family and Community Services - How to make a report:* <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/preventing-child-abuse-and-neglect/resources-for-mandatory-reporters/how-to-make-a-report>
- *NSW Family and Community Services - Protecting Children:* <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/preventing-child-abuse-and-neglect/protecting-children>
- *NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide:* <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/kts/reporting/mrg2>
- *NSW Ombudsman - Employment Related Child Protection:* <https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-work/employment-related-child-protection>
- *Child Safe Standards –Office of the Children's Guardian*
- *Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)*

### 5. DEFINITIONS

**Child Protection Contact Person:** the person who has been nominated to manage child protection issues within the College as detailed in **Section 23 - Child Protection Contact Person**.

**College Staff Member** refers to:

- All paid employees whether employed on a permanent, temporary or casual basis, and
- All persons who have been engaged to work within the College or who have face to face contact with students of the College in any place and on any basis, including persons holding a church ministry licence or church-appointed position, consultants, students on tertiary practicum placements, or adult volunteers working with students in any capacity.

**Employee** includes any of the following persons:

- Any employee of the College whether or not employed in connection with any work or activity in the College that relate to children
- Any individual engaged by the College to provide services to students (including in the capacity of a volunteer).

**Grooming:** a pattern of conduct that is consistent with the aim of developing a sexual relationship and for which there

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is no other reasonable explanation, and typically involves any or all of the following elements:

- Persuading a child or young person and those around them that a special relationship exists with the offending adult;
- Testing boundaries including codes of conduct and professional standards applying to the adult, and socially accepted norms of behaviour applying in the circumstances;
- Inappropriately extending the relationship outside the work environment or framework of authorised contact;
- Inappropriate personal communication with the child or young person involved.

**Grooming Behaviour:** manipulative cultivation of relationships by an adult in order to develop or maintain a sexual relationship with a child or young person. Typically the cultivation of relationships will be extended to gain the confidence of the child or young person who is the intended target of the behaviour, their family, and others around them including teachers and persons in support relationships such as church workers and volunteers, sports coaches and fellow students.

**Investigation:** an inquiry into a matter including preliminary or other inquiry into, or examination of the matter.

**Parent:** a student's biological parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians and/or care-givers.

**PSOA:** Person Subject of Allegations

**Reportable Allegation:** an allegation of reportable conduct against a person or an allegation of misconduct that may involve reportable conduct.

**Reportable Conduct:** any sexual offence or sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child including a child pornography offence; any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child or any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child – even if the child consented to the behaviour.

**Student** refers to:

- a) a Child or Children which in this Code means persons under the age of 16 years,
- b) a Young Person or Persons which in this Code means persons between the ages of 16 and 18, and
- c) any student of the College over the age of 18 years

## 6. DUTY OF CARE

All College Staff Members have a duty to take reasonable care for the safety and welfare of students in their care. That duty is to consider and take all reasonable action to protect students from known hazards or risk of harm that can be reasonably predicted. The standard of care that is required of a College Staff Member must take into consideration various factors, such as a student's maturity and ability.

This duty of care owed to students by all College Staff Members applies during all activities and functions conducted or arranged by the College where a student is in the care of a College Staff Member.

The risk associated with any activity needs to be assessed and managed by College Staff Members before the activity is undertaken. A single serious failure to exercise appropriate duty of care, or persistent repeated failures, may constitute neglect or negligence according to the law if actual harm is caused, or if there is the potential to cause significant harm to a student.

All College Staff Members also have a duty to not neglect the welfare of students. Neglect includes either an action or inaction by a person who has care responsibilities towards a student which may include:

- a) Supervisory neglect (failure to adequately supervise a student)
- b) Carer neglect (grossly inadequate care of a student)
- c) Failure to protect from abuse (unreasonable failure to respond to information that may result in harm to a student)
- d) Reckless acts or failure to act (including a gross breach of professional standards that may result in harm to a student)

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In relation to this duty of care all College Staff Members must participate in training opportunities as proposed to them by the College in order to maintain and update their understanding of child protection law and practice and the College's policies and procedures in relation to the care of students.

## 7. WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

A Working with Children Check (WWC) is a prerequisite for anyone in child-related work in NSW. It involves a national police check and a review of findings of misconduct involving children. College staff and volunteers must apply for their own check online. The outcome of the check will either be a clearance or a bar. Clearance will be valid for any child-related work, or volunteering for five years, anywhere in NSW. People with a bar may not work or volunteer in child-related roles.

Verity Christian College will verify the WWC status of every new paid employee and volunteer before engaging them to ensure that they have clearance.

The College will keep hard-copy records of the verification of child-related workers and volunteers which will include Full Name, Date of Birth, Working with Children Check Number, date and outcome of the Check Verification and the Check expiry date.

VCC will verify the WWC status of each staff member at the commencement of each school year.

## 8. CHILD FOCUSED RISK MANAGEMENT

All College Staff Members will ensure that they use child focussed risk management practices in all their activities taking into account the practices and procedures set out in **VCCP5.3 - Workplace Health and Safety Policy** and **VCCP6.11 - Excursion Policy and Procedures**.

## 9. COMMUNICATING THIS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Child protection is a shared responsibility. Education is to be provided annually for the College Community as vital preventative aspects of child protection.

A designated staff member, together with the Principal will ensure Policies and Procedures are regularly reviewed and updated and communicated to staff.

College Staff Members will be made aware of their Mandatory Reporting Obligations by:

### 9.1. Staff

All staff will be made aware of this Policy via annual mandatory Child Protection training. Training will be delivered either internally or facilitated through an external provider. This training will occur during the January Staff Development week. A log of staff that have participated in child protection training will be kept by the Principal.

Throughout the year relevant information will be forwarded to staff electronically to ensure they are up to date.

Staff will be reminded of the Policy as it applies to them and their students through review at staff development meetings from time to time.

The explanation and implementation of this policy and procedures shall form part of the new staff induction program.

### 9.2. Parent/carer/volunteer

The Child Protection Policy is available on the College's website.

The Principal will raise the awareness of Child Protection within the College Community by regularly including relevant information through brochures, posters and newsletter articles.

### 9.3. Students

The Child Protection Policy will be integrated in the PDHPE program during Child Protection lessons.

Students will be advised by the relevant teaching staff and at an age appropriate level, of the College's Child Protection procedures.

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### 10. REPORTING

Where an allegation is made against a person other than a College Staff Member refer to **Section 24 - Child Protection Notification Flowchart**.

Annual training will also include information about the Reportable Conduct Scheme, including employee's reporting obligations.

Where an allegation is made against a College Staff Member then a report will need to be made to the Office of the Children's Guardian in accordance with **Section 11 - College Staff Members Obligations**.

### 11. COLLEGE STAFF MEMBERS OBLIGATIONS

All College Staff Members are required to be aware of and comply with this policy.

Child protection laws require all College Staff Members who are engaged in child-related work or who are otherwise not exempt to have completed a Working with Children Check and report certain matters of concern in relation to students, including:

- Informing the College if they are charged with or convicted of an offence relevant to working in child-related employment, or if they have had any reportable allegation made against them
- Reporting to the College any allegations or convictions of Reportable Conduct involving any College Staff Member
- Reporting to the College any information or concerns about inappropriate behaviour by any College Staff Member that involves a student
- Fulfilling their legal obligation to report risk of significant harm, or to report possible criminal activity, in accordance with reporting procedures.
- Maintaining confidentiality of all parties concerned.

In any matter where a College Staff Member is in doubt as to the requirements of confidentiality, they should seek the advice of the Child Protection Contact Person (initially the School Principal) without discussing the matter with others. In any case where the serious concern involves actions or alleged neglect by the Child Protection Contact Person, a College Staff Member must take the matter of concern directly to the Senior Minister of LifeSource Church who is also Chairperson or the Board of Management.

A College Staff Member must not take detrimental action against the complainant or person who reported the information. This includes any action that could reasonably be perceived to be detrimental action in reprisal. To do so may be regarded as serious misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

There will be consequences for a breach thereof. An alleged breach of this policy will require:

- An internal report to be made to/or by the Principal
- A referral to external authorities under relevant legislation
- An investigation to be conducted as required

In accordance with the **Children's Guardian Act 2019 (Section 29)** in the case of an allegation being made against an employee of Verity Christian College:

1. The Principal must notify the Office of the Children's Guardian of the following:
  - a) any reportable allegation, or reportable conviction, against an employee of the College of which the Principal becomes aware
  - b) whether or not the College proposes to take any disciplinary or other action in relation to the employee and the reasons why it intends to take or not to take any such action
  - c) any written submissions made to the head of the agency concerning any such allegation or conviction that the

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employee concerned wished to have considered in determining what (if any) disciplinary or other action should be taken in relation to the employee.

- d) The outcome of the College's investigation of the allegations.
2. The notification must be made as soon as practicable and, in the case of the notification of a reportable allegation or reportable conviction, must be made, in any event, within 7 days of the Principal becoming aware of the allegation or conviction (or within such further period as may be agreed to by the Office of the Children's Guardian).
3. The Notification should include the following information:
  - a) That a report has been received in relation to an employee of the School, and
  - b) The type of reportable conduct, and
  - c) The name of the employee, and
  - d) The name and contact details of School and the Head of Entity, and
  - e) For a reportable allegation, whether it has been reported to Police, and
  - f) If a report has been made to the Child Protection Helpline, that a report has been made, and
  - g) The nature of the relevant entity's initial risk assessment and risk management action,

The notice must also include the following, if known to the Head of Entity:

- a) Details of the reportable allegation or conviction considered to be a reportable conviction,
  - b) The date of birth and working with children number, if any, of the employee the subject of the report,
  - c) The police report reference number (if Police were notified),
  - d) The report reference number if reported to the Child Protection Helpline,
  - e) The names of other relevant entities that employ or engage the employee, whether or not directly, to provide a service to children, including as a volunteer or contractor.
4. The Principal must make arrangements within the College to require employees of the College to notify the Principal of any such reportable allegation or conviction of which they become aware.

If a breach of this policy is established this may result in disciplinary action being taken against any College Staff Member.

In relation to a College Staff Member who is an employee, such disciplinary action may result in termination of their employment. In relation to a College Staff Member who is a person holding a church ministry licence or church-appointed position, or any consultant, student on tertiary practicum placement, or volunteer, conduct that is assessed as being a breach of this policy may lead to the termination of their engagement with the College.

## 12. PROCESS FOR INVESTIGATING AN ALLEGATION OF REPORTABLE CONDUCT

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the following steps are taken to investigate an allegation of reportable conduct.

### 12.1 Initial steps

Once an allegation of reportable conduct against an employee is received, the Principal is required to:

- determine whether it is an allegation of reportable conduct;
- assess whether the Department of Community and Justice (here forward referred to as DCJ) or the Police need to be notified (ie, if reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm or a potential criminal offence). If they have been notified, seek clearance from these statutory agencies prior to the school proceeding with the reportable conduct investigation;
- notify the child's parents (unless to do so would be likely to compromise the investigation or any investigation by the DCJ or Police);
- notify the Office of Children's Guardian (now forward referred to as OCG) within 7 business days of receiving the allegation;

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- carry out a risk assessment and take action to reduce/remove risk, where appropriate; and
- provide an initial letter to the **Person Subject of Allegation (from here on referred to as PSOA)** advising that an allegation of reportable conduct has been made against them and the School's responsibility to investigate this matter under Section 34 of the Children's Guardian Act 2019; and
- investigate the allegation or appoint someone to investigate the allegation,
- notify insurer.

### Investigation principles

- During the investigation of a reportable conduct allegation the School will:
- follow the principles of procedural fairness;
- inform PSOA of the substance of any allegations made against them, at the appropriate time in the investigation, and provide them with a reasonable opportunity to respond to the allegations;
- make reasonable enquiries or investigations before making a decision;
- avoid conflicts of interest;
- conduct the investigation without unjustifiable delay;
- handle the matter as confidentially as possible; and
- provide appropriate support for all parties including the child/children, witnesses and the PSOA.

### 12.3 Investigation steps

#### In an investigation the Principal or appointed investigator will generally:

- interview relevant witnesses and gather relevant documentation;
- provide a letter of allegation to the PSOA;
- provide the PSOA with the opportunity to provide a response to the allegations either in writing or at Interview;
- consider relevant evidence and make a preliminary finding in accordance with the OCG guidelines;
- inform the PSOA of the preliminary finding in writing by the Head of Entity and provide them with a further opportunity to respond or make a further submission prior to the matter moving to final findings;
- consider any response provided by the PSOA;
- make a final finding in accordance with the OCG guidelines;
- decide on the disciplinary action, if any, to be taken against the PSOA;
- if it is completed, send the final report to the OCG within 30 days after having received the allegation, as per section 36 of the Children's Guardian Act 2019.
- should the final report be unfinished within 30 days, the Head of Entity must provide, at minimum, an interim report to the OCG within 30 days of having received the allegation, as per section 38 of the Children's Guardian Act 2019.

#### Submission of an interim report must include;

- a reason for not providing the final report within 30 days and an estimated time frame for completion of the report.
- specific information, including (if known); the facts and circumstances of the reportable allegation; any known information about a reportable conviction; action taken since the OCG received a notification about the reportable allegation or reportable conviction; further action the Head of Entity proposes to take in relation to the reportable allegation or reportable conviction; including if the Head of Entity proposes to take no further action; the reasons for the action taken and the action proposed to be taken or the reasons for the decision to take no further action; other information prescribed by the regulations; and

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- be accompanied by copies of documents in the School's possession, including transcripts of interviews and copies of evidence.

The steps outlined above may need to be varied on occasion to meet particular circumstances. For example, it may be necessary to take different steps where the matter is also being investigated by the DCJ or Police.

A PSOA may have an appropriate support person with them during the interview process. Such a person is there for support only and as a witness to the proceedings and not as an advocate or to take an active role.

### 13. RISK MANAGEMENT THROUGHOUT AN INVESTIGATION OF A REPORTABLE CONDUCT ALLEGATION

Risk management means identifying the potential for an incident or accident to occur and taking steps to reduce the likelihood or severity of its occurrence.

The Principal is responsible for risk management throughout the investigation and will assess risk at the beginning of the investigation, during and at the end of the investigation.

#### 13.1 Initial risk assessment

Following an allegation of reportable conduct against an employee, the Principal conducts an initial risk assessment to identify and minimise the risks to:

- the child(ren) who are the subject of the allegation;
- other children with whom the employee may have contact;
- the PSOA;
- the School, and
- the proper investigation of the allegation.

The factors which will be considered during the risk assessment include:

- the nature and seriousness of the allegations;
- the vulnerability of the child(ren) the PSOA has contact with at work;
- the nature of the position occupied by the PSOA;
- the level of supervision of the PSOA; and
- the disciplinary history or safety of the PSOA and possible risks to the investigation.

The Principal will take appropriate action to minimise risks. This may include the PSOA being temporarily relieved of some duties, being required not to have contact with certain students, being asked to take paid leave, or being suspended from duty. When taking action to address any risks identified, the School will take into consideration both the needs of the child(ren) and the PSOA.

A decision to take action on the basis of a risk assessment is not indicative of the findings of the matter. Until the investigation is completed and a finding is made, any action, such as an employee being suspended, is not to be considered to be an indication that the alleged conduct by the employee did occur.

#### 13.2 Ongoing risk assessment

The Principal will continually monitor risk during the investigation including in the light of any new relevant information that emerges.

#### 13.3 Findings

At the completion of the investigation, a finding will be made in relation to the allegation and a decision made by the Principal regarding what action, if any, is required in relation to the PSOA, the child(ren) involved and any other parties.

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### 13.4 Information for the PSOA

The PSOA will be advised:

- that an allegation has been made against them (at the appropriate time in the investigation); and
- of the substance of the allegation, or of any preliminary finding and the final finding.

The PSOA does not automatically have the right to:

- know or have confirmed the identity of the person who made the allegation; or
- be shown the content of the OCG notification form or other investigation material that reveals information provided by other employees or witnesses.

The WWC Act enables a person who has a sustained finding referred to the OCG to request access to the records held by the school in relation to the finding of misconduct involving children, once final findings are made. The entitlements of a person to request access to information in terms of section 46 of the WWC Act is enlivened when a finding of misconduct involving children has been made.

### 13.5 Disciplinary action

As a result of the allegations, investigation or final findings, the School may take disciplinary action against the PSOA (including termination of employment).

In relation to any disciplinary action the school will give the PSOA:

- details of the proposed disciplinary action; and
- a reasonable opportunity to respond before a final decision is made.

### 13.6 Confidentiality

It is important when dealing with allegations of reportable conduct that the matter be dealt with as confidentially as possible.

The School requires that all parties maintain confidentiality during the investigation including in relation to the handling and storing of documents and records.

Records about allegations of reportable conduct against employees will be kept [in a secure area] and will be accessible by [the Head of Entity or with the Head of Entity's express authority].

No employee may comment to the media about an allegation of reportable conduct unless expressly authorised by the Principal to do so.

Staff members who become aware of a breach of confidentiality in relation to a reportable conduct allegation must advise the Principal.

## 14. CRIMINAL OFFENCES

In 2018 the Crimes Act was amended to adopt recommendations of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. The new offences are designed to prevent child abuse and to bring abuse that has already occurred to the attention of the Police.

### 14.1 Failure to protect offence

An adult working in a school, therefore all staff members, will commit an offence if they know another adult working there poses a serious risk of committing a child abuse offence and they have the power to reduce or remove the risk, and they negligently fail to do so either by acts and/or omissions.

This offence is targeted at those in positions of authority and responsibility working with children who turn a blind eye to a known and serious risk rather than using their power to protect children.

### 14.2 Failure to report offence

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Any adult, and therefore all staff members, will commit an offence if they know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child abuse offence has been committed and fail to report that information to Police, without a reasonable excuse. A reasonable excuse would include where the adult has reported the matter to the Principal and is aware that the Principal has reported the matter to the Police.

### 15. MANDATORY REPORTING

A mandatory reporter in NSW is an individual required by under **Section 27 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998** to “report to the Child Protection Helpline when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child, or a class of children, is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect, and those grounds arise during the course of or from the person’s work.”

Verity Christian College recognises that all staff, including volunteers, are mandatory reporters and will report matters where a child is at risk of significant harm to the **Child Protection Helpline on 132 111** after completing the mandatory reporter guide (MRG). The general public will continue to make reports to the Child Protection Helpline by calling 132 111.

As mandatory reporters in NSW, Verity Christian College staff may also report concerns held about the safety, welfare, or well-being of a young person (age 16-17), but are not required to do so by law.

#### 15.1 Identifying and Responding to Child Abuse

See **Section 24- Child Protection Notification Flowchart** and **Section 25 - Indicators of Abuse and Neglect**

##### 15.1.1 Identifying Child Abuse

All Verity Christian College staff are expected to be familiar with the general indicators for child abuse and neglect and their indicators, as well as the process for responding to disclosures. Further detail is covered in annual staff training. Indicators of Abuse and Neglect are outlined in **Section 25** in this Policy.

##### 15.1.2 Responding To Child Abuse And Neglect

All staff are required to report cases of suspected risk of significant harm to the Principal who may consult with other staff such as the College Chaplain.

A Keep Them Safe Mandatory Reporters Guide (MRG) will be completed and Verity Christian College will follow the process outlined there to report to the relevant authorities. The MRG categorises abuse or neglect under eight headings which are as follows:

- i. Physical abuse
- ii. Neglect: supervision; shelter/environment; food; hygiene/clothing; medical care; mental health care; Education – Not Enrolled; Education – Habitual Absence
- iii. Sexual abuse: Child, young person, problematic sexual behaviour towards others
- iv. Psychological harm
- v. Child/Young person is a danger to self and/or others
- vi. Relinquishing Care
- vii. Carer concern: substance abuse; mental health; domestic violence
- viii. Unborn child

Where there are urgent concerns for a child or young person’s health or safety, then it is important to immediately contact the police using the emergency line ‘000’. Suspected imminent risk of significant harm concerns need to be reported to the Child Protection Helpline immediately by telephone. Concerns identified as suspected risk of significant harm must be reported to the Helpline within 24 hours of becoming known. The Child Protection Helpline must be contacted when:

- There are current concerns about suspected risk of significant harm and/or
- The Mandatory Reporter Guide indicates this should be done.

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When a disclosure of child abuse is made, confidentiality must not be promised and whenever possible the student and/or parents/carer should be involved in the actions that may be taken.

It is recognised that it is good practice to discuss a report with the family, where this does not put a child at further risk. Where a close and supportive relationship exists with the family, concerns may be able to be raised in the form of assisting a family to seek support, and take, with statutory help, the necessary steps to ensure a child's safety. This may be appropriate in cases of neglect, or where there is a clear disclosure of abuse by someone outside the family and the family is believing of the child.

Where a child or young person is disclosing or is suspected of being physically or sexually abused, either within the family, or from an unknown source, this should not be discussed with the family prior to a report, as it may result in pressure being placed on a child not to tell, or further abuse or risk to the child or young person.

The Principal will advise the staff member if a significant harm report has been made and the staff member will be provided with the Contact Reference Number (CRN) as soon as practicable. The staff member will also be informed of the feedback provided by the Child Protection Helpline.

**Note:** A staff member who has raised concerns of suspected risk of significant harm should report directly to Department of Communities and Justice if there is any reasonable doubt that the report has been made by the Principal. This may be if, for example, the Principal does not advise the staff member that the report has been made or the Principal declines to make the report.

### 15.1.3 Documenting Your Response

All staff and volunteers must document observations, consultations and actions involving potential child abuse or neglect using **VCCF12.81 - Child Protection Report Form**. A copy will be stored with the Principal. A MRG will also be completed, signed, printed and stored in the Principal's office.

All records must provide factual information, observable indicators and refrain from opinion or conclusions. Recorders must include child's name, DOB, date, approximate time of any observations or disclosures with exact wording of statements made using indented quotation marks ("example"). Documentation will not include professional judgments and will include use of first person singular examples, "I observed ..."

In the event that a notification is made to Department of Communities and Justice the Contact Reference Number (CRN) is kept on the Principal's files as proof the report has been made. Written records will be made of all communication with Police and Department of Communities and Justice.

### 15.1.4 Student Interviews In Cases Reported to Department of Communities and Justice

In relation to reportable cases of risk of significant harm where Department of Communities and Justice has been notified, officers of DCJ may wish to carry out student interviews, sometimes jointly at the College.

No student will be interviewed at the College against the wishes of the student and it is the Principal's responsibility to inform the student of this.

At the commencement of the interview, the Principal should ask the investigating officers to explain to the student, in the presence of the Principal, the purpose of the interview and their role. The Principal will inform the student of his or her right to choose a supportive adult to be present at the interview. DCJ Officers are responsible for communicating with parents about any matters related to an interview. If a person is nominated by the student, the interview must not commence until that person has arrived. What takes place in the interview becomes part of the investigation and must remain confidential.

Except in cases which involve a member of the family, it is expected that a parent of the child concerned will be present at any interview with the child.

### 15.2.5 Removal Of Students By Department of Communities and Justice Officers

If the Principal is approached by officers from DCJ to remove a student from the School premises the following will occur:

- The Principal must be advised
- Sight the identification of the officers
- Take a copy of the Section 60 (remove the student from school) or Section 62A (order for student to remain at

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school) notice

- Record details of the actions, names of officers and, where possible, place of lodgement of the student
- Gain an assurance from officers that they will immediately inform the parent/carer that the student has either been removed from the College or has been ordered to remain at the College.

### 15.2.6 Exchange Of Information

Because the protection of children and young people from risk of harm is deemed to be more important in some situations than an individual's right to privacy, there are statutory provisions that override restrictions on disclosure of personal information.

**Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998** allows government agencies and non-government organisations who are prescribed bodies to exchange information that relates to a child's or young person's safety, welfare or well-being, whether or not the child or young person is known to Community Services, and whether or not the child or young person consents to the information exchange. **Chapter 16A** also requires prescribed bodies to take reasonable steps to coordinate decision making and the delivery of services regarding children and young people.

Verity Christian College is a prescribed body and as such will respond to requests under **Section 16A** where appropriate. DCJ can also make requests under **Section 248 of the Act**, and again, Verity Christian College will comply where appropriate and as required.

All **Section 16A or Section 248** requests for information should be directed to the Principal who will consult as required and determine the validity of a request and co-ordinate Verity Christian College's response. Similarly, should Verity Christian College wish to use the provisions of **Section 16A** to seek information from another agency, this should be co-ordinated via the Principal.

Before any phone discussions occur between officers of DCJ and the Principal, the Principal will always confirm the identity of the caller by phoning the known number of the DCJ before any discussions occur.

Any staff receiving a call from DCJ must refer the officers to the Principal.

Providing information in good faith, including a response to requests for information and requests for a service, is not a breach of professional ethics or standards of professional conduct and does not carry liability for defamation or constitute grounds for civil action.

## 16. REPORTABLE CONDUCT

### 16.1 What Is Reportable Conduct under the Children's Guardian Act 2019?

Under the **Children's Guardian Act 2019**, some matters of abuse may be reportable to the DCJ as well as the office of the Children's Guardian. This will occur when an allegation of abuse or neglect by a College Staff Member constitutes a reportable allegation under the **Children's Guardian Act 2019**.

Under the **Children's Guardian Act 2019**, reportable conduct refers to the following:

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

Reportable conduct does not extend to:

- conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of children, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the children and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards; or

- the use of physical force that, in all the circumstances, is trivial or negligible and the circumstances in which it was used have been investigated and the result of the investigation has been recorded in accordance with appropriate procedures; or
- conduct of a class or kind exempted from being reportable conduct by the Children’s Guardian Act under section 30.

#### 16.1.1 Definitions

The following definitions relate to *reportable conduct*:

- **Sexual offence:** an offence of a sexual nature under a law of the State, another State, a Territory, or the Commonwealth, committed against, with or in the presence of a child, such as:
  - sexual touching of a child;
  - a child grooming offence;
  - production, dissemination or possession of child abuse material.

Definitions of ‘grooming’, within child protection legislation, are complex. Under the Crimes Act, grooming or procuring a child under the age of 16 years for unlawful sexual activity is classed as a sexual offence. The Crimes Act (s73) also extends the age of consent to 18 years when a child is in a ‘special care’ relationship. Under Schedule 1(2) of the WWC Act, grooming is recognised as a form of sexual misconduct. The Children’s Guardian Act 2019 and this Child Protection Policy reflect these definitions within the context of the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Division 2).

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

- **Sexual misconduct:** conduct with, towards or in the presence of a child that is sexual in nature (but not a sexual offence). The Act provides the following (non-exhaustive) examples:
  - descriptions of sexual acts without a legitimate reason to provide the descriptions;
  - sexual comments, conversations or communications;
  - comments to a child that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards the child, or another child.

Note – crossing professional boundaries comes within the scope of the scheme to the extent that the alleged conduct meets the definition of sexual misconduct. That is, the conduct with, towards or in the presence of a child that is sexual in nature (but is not a sexual offence).

- **Assault:** an assault can occur when a person intentionally or recklessly (ie. knows the assault is possible but ignores the risk):
  - applies physical force against a child without lawful justification or excuse – such as hitting, striking, kicking, punching or dragging a child (actual physical force); or
  - causes a child to apprehend the immediate and unlawful use of physical force against them – such as threatening to physically harm a child through words and/or gestures regardless of whether the person actually intends to apply any force (apprehension of physical force)
- **Ill-treatment:** is defined as conduct towards a child that is:
  - unreasonable; and
  - seriously inappropriate, improper, inhumane or cruel.

Ill-treatment can include a range of conduct such as making excessive or degrading demands of a child; a pattern of hostile or degrading comments or behaviour towards a child; and using inappropriate forms of behaviour management towards a child.

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- **Neglect:** defined as a significant failure to provide adequate and proper food, supervision, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging for a child that causes or is likely to cause harm - by a person who has care and/or has responsibility towards a child.

Neglect can be an ongoing situation of repeated failure by a caregiver to meet a child's physical or psychological needs, or a single significant incident where a caregiver fails to fulfill a duty or obligation, resulting in actual harm to a child where there is the potential for significant harm to a child. Examples of neglect include failing to protect a child from abuse and exposing a child to a harmful environment.

- Behaviour that causes significant **emotional or psychological harm** to a child is conduct that is intentional or reckless (without reasonable excuse), obviously or very clearly unreasonable and which results in significant emotional harm or trauma to a child.

For a reportable allegation involving psychological harm, the following elements must be present:

- An obviously or very clearly unreasonable or serious act or series of acts that the employees knew or ought to have known was unacceptable, and
  - Evidence of psychological harm to the child that is more than transient, including displaying patterns of 'out of character behaviour', regression in behaviour, distress, anxiety, physical symptoms or self-harm, and
  - An alleged causal link between the employee's conduct and the significant emotional or psychological harm to the child.
- **Reportable allegation** is an allegation that an employee has engaged in conduct that may be reportable conduct.
  - **Reportable conviction** means a conviction (including a finding of guilt without the court proceeding to a conviction), in NSW or elsewhere, of an offence involving reportable conduct.
  - **Employee** of an entity includes:
    - an individual employed by, or in, the entity
    - a volunteer providing services to children
    - a contractor engaged directly by the entity (or by a third party) where the contractor holds, or is required to hold, a WWCC clearance for the purposes of their work with an entity; and
    - a person engaged by a religious body where that person holds, or is required to hold, a WWCC clearance for the purposes of their work with the religious body.
  - **PSOA** (Person Subject Of the Allegation).

### 16.2 What is the Role of the Department of Communities and Justice?

The DCJ is responsible for monitoring the handling of reportable allegations and convictions against employees of all government and certain non-government agencies (such as schools, child care centres, out of school hours services and agencies providing substitute residential care). The DCJ is also responsible for scrutinizing the systems of these agencies for preventing and handling reportable allegations and convictions against employees.

Heads of Agencies, in this case the Principal of VCC (or their delegates) are required to make a notification to the Ombudsman within 7 days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation or conviction.

Reportable Conduct:

- involves a child (a person under the age of 18 years) at the time of the alleged incident; and
- involves certain defined conduct as described in the Act (see below).

The OCG:

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- must keep under scrutiny the systems for preventing reportable conduct by employees of non-government schools and the handling of, or response to, reportable allegations (including allegations which are exempt from notification) or convictions;
- must receive and assess notifications from non-government schools concerning reportable conduct or reportable convictions;
- is required to oversee or monitor the conduct of investigations by non-government schools into allegations of reportable conduct or reportable convictions;
- must determine whether an investigation that has been monitored has been conducted properly, and whether appropriate action has been taken as a result of the investigation;
- may directly investigate an allegation of reportable conduct or reportable conviction against an employee of a non-government school, or the handling of or response to such a matter (eg arising out of complaints by the person who is the subject of an allegation); and
- may investigate the way in which a relevant entity has dealt with, or is dealing with, a report, complaint or notification, if the OCG considers it appropriate to do so.

At the end of the investigation into the allegation, the Principal must send a report to the Ombudsman that includes the College's findings in relation to the allegations, details of any action taken and copies of documents on which the report is based. This enables the DCJ to determine if the investigation was carried out in a satisfactory manner.

### 16.3 What is VCC Child Protection Code of Conduct?

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with **VCCF12.8 Child Protection Code of Conduct**. This Code provides College Staff Members with guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. This Code is also included in the Staff Handbook, which is provided to each staff member either at the commencement of each school year, or at the point of employment at the College.

In the event that a College Staff Member breaches the VCC Child Protection Code of Conduct, the Principal will respond with appropriate staff disciplinary measures. Serious breaches of this Code of Conduct, or less serious, persistent breaches, could be grounds for disciplinary action or dismissal. The Principal will keep a record of such instances in a lockable file cabinet in the Principal's office.

College Staff Members are made aware of the standards of professional conduct expected of them during the College's annual Child Protection awareness training.

Staff may also be reminded of the Code of Conduct as it applies to them and their students during individual staff feedback and review meetings. Records of these meetings are kept in a lockable file cabinet in the Principal's office. A copy is also provided to the staff member.

### 16.4 What is the Procedure for Handling and Responding to Non- Reportable Allegations?

If a College Staff Member forms a Child Protection concern about another College employee as a result of anything they have seen, heard or been told they should:

1. Inform the Principal.
2. Document the allegation in as close to verbatim account as possible of: what has been seen or said and by whom; where and when this occurred.

The Principal will:

1. Ask questions to clarify the situation: what has been alleged? (Who, what, when, where?) Estimate of physical force or ill-treatment?
2. Determine if the child or young person is at risk of significant harm. If so, follow the procedures in **Section 24 - Child Protection Notification Flowchart**.
3. Assess whether disclosure or allegations suggest possible criminal conduct and consider any need for notification to Police. If so, there will NOT be any further response by the College without consultation with the Police.

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4. Consider and address risk and situation management issues subject to involvement and input from Community Services and/or Police.
5. Assess the situation to determine:
  - Was the action reasonable for the management, care of discipline of the student(s)?
  - Was the action in accord with College's Code of Conduct?

If YES – the Principal will manage the allegation in accordance with the VCC normal procedures for the incident. The Principal will also consider any 'class or kind' exemptions that may apply. (NB. Reportable conduct that falls within the exemptions from reporting under the 'class or kind' determination will NOT be reported to the Department of Communities and Justice). Such situations may warrant a potential disciplinary response.

If NO – the Principal will assess whether or not the allegation relates to reportable conduct as defined by the **Children's Guardian Act 2019**?

The Principal will record and file the result of this enquiry and subsequent response.

### 17. FAILURE TO REPORT

A mandated professional who fails to report a 'belief based on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection' because of physical or sexual abuse is liable to be prosecuted.

### 18. RECORD KEEPING

A College Staff Member:

- Has a responsibility to create and maintain appropriate records of their professional activities and decisions in the care and protection of students, including contemporaneous records of any disclosure, observations and discussions including any breach of this policy
- Must remain mindful of the need to retain such records securely and confidentially
- Must seek appropriate advice regarding the retention/destruction of such records.

Verity Christian College will follow these Record Keeping Protocols:

**Who:** Principal

**What:** Records of all relevant facts, evidence, findings, communications

**Where:** In a secure location in the Principal's office.

**When:** Immediately the incident is reported and investigated

### 19. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS WITH STUDENTS

The College expects all College Staff Members to be caring, compassionate adults who take an interest in the wellbeing of students, and who set appropriate boundaries for staff to student relations.

College Staff Members must be aware that their interactions with students are based on a trusting relationship arising from the nature of their role in the College, and that those relationships are open to scrutiny.

At all times College Staff Members must treat students with respect and behave in ways that promote their safety, welfare and wellbeing.

At all times, College Staff Members must conduct themselves in a professional manner towards students, consistent with their appointed role.

College Staff Members must not:

- a) Engage in inappropriate physical contact/force with a student including physical/corporal punishment of a child in the course of their role at the College

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- b) Act in ways which may cause a student to reasonably fear that unjustified force will be used against them, even if this is not their intention
- c) Behave in a manner which may cause psychological harm to a student
- d) Correct or discipline a student in excess of what is reasonable or appropriate for the situation.

Any College Staff Member must not act recklessly in this regard.

### 20. SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

College Staff Members must not:

- a) Engage in any conduct with students that could be reasonably construed as crossing professional boundaries. Inappropriate and overly personal or intimate relationships with, conduct towards, or focus on a student or group of students would be considered as such. A single serious 'crossing of the boundaries' by a College Staff Member, or persistent less serious breaches of professional conduct in this area, may constitute sexual misconduct, particularly if a College Staff Member either knows, or ought to have known, that such behaviour was unacceptable.
- b) Engage in conduct that is reflective of grooming behaviour in relation to a student, their family or friends.
- c) Make sexually explicit comments or engage in other sexually overt behaviour towards, or in the presence of, a student
- d) Have an intimate or romantic or sexual relationship with any student regardless of their age (it is irrelevant whether the relationship is consensual or non-consensual or condoned by parents)
- e) Commit a criminal offence involving a sexual element that is committed against, with or in the presence of a student or any child or children in any other circumstances.

Where there are existing personal relationships between a College Staff Member and a student such as a family relationship or a close friendship, the College Staff Member must behave in a transparent and prudent fashion, and be mindful of any perceived conflict of interest or purpose, ensuring that the College Staff Member does not breach any law, this policy, or any other relevant College policy.

In circumstances where such personal relationships may appear to be questionable or inappropriate, or may appear to be in breach of any law, this policy, or other relevant policy, the College Staff Member must notify their supervisor of such relationships so that any potential or perceived conflict may be carefully managed.

Appropriate declarations must be made to the Principal as early as possible.

### 21. ICT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In relation to communicating with students, College Staff Members must comply with all relevant policies and procedures of the College applicable to electronic information and communication technology (ICT) and social media.

College Staff Members are prohibited from photographing or filming a student other than for purposes approved by the College. Secretly taking photographs or other images of students, retaining them for unjustifiable purposes, sending them to other persons or posting them online is strictly prohibited.

Employees will not engage in social media contact with any student unless written permission is granted by the College Board and Principal.

### 22. ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND TOBACCO

College Staff Members must not purchase for, offer, supply, give or administer to a student, including those over the age of 18, illegal drugs, restricted substances, prescribed or non-prescribed medication (unless dealing with or administering medication in accordance with **VCCP3.23 - Medications Policy**), alcohol, and/or tobacco.

College Staff Members must not encourage or condone the use by a student of illegal drugs, restricted substances, alcohol, and/or tobacco. College Staff Members must not consume illegal drugs, restricted substances, alcohol or

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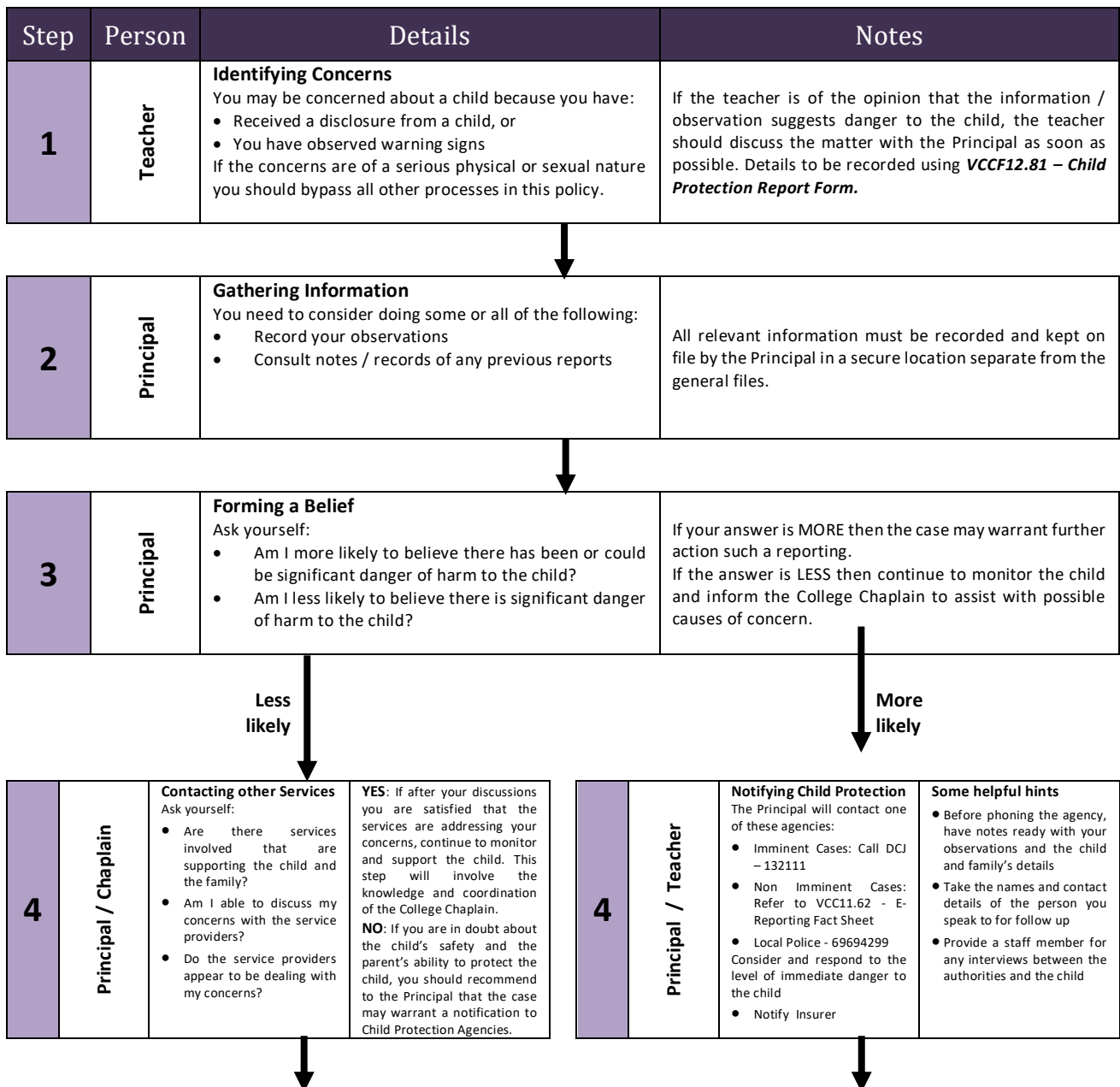
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tobacco on school premises or at any College-related activity where a student is present.

## 23. COLLEGE CHILD PROTECTION CONTACT PERSON

The nominated College Child Protection Contact Person is the Principal who may be contacted at Verity Christian College on 02 69649953.

## 24. CHILD PROTECTION NOTIFICATION FLOWCHART



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<b>5</b>	<b>Principal / Chaplain</b>	<p><b>Follow Up</b>                  After the report has been made you need to ensure that ongoing support and care is offered to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Staff</li> </ul>	<p>The Chaplain will coordinate the following processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checking on the action taken by Child Protection Agencies</li> <li>• Monitoring action and support by parents</li> <li>• Monitoring child's welfare by discussion with the child and staff</li> <li>• Monitoring the need for support for the reporting teacher</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>	<b>Principal / Chaplain</b>	<p><b>Follow Up</b>                  After the report has been made you need to ensure that ongoing support and care is offered to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Staff</li> </ul>	<p>The Chaplain will coordinate the following processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checking on the action taken by Child Protection Agencies</li> <li>• Monitoring action and support by parents</li> <li>• Monitoring child's welfare by discussion with the child and staff</li> <li>• Monitoring the need for support for the reporting teacher</li> </ul>
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## 25. INDICATORS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Risk of harm within the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* relates to the impact of abuse and neglect on a child or young person. The following indicators have been developed from research and clinical experience over recent decades. One indicator in isolation may not imply abuse or neglect. Each indicator needs to be considered in the context of other indicators and the child's or young person's circumstances. The lists are not in hierarchical order.

### 22.1. Setting the context

The following factors in the life circumstances of the child or young person are relevant when considering indicators of abuse and neglect:

- history of previous harm to the child or young person
- social or geographic isolation of the child, young person or family, including lack of access to extended family or supports
- abuse or neglect of a sibling
- family history of violence including injury to children and young people
- domestic or dating violence

Issues for the parent or caregiver affecting their ability to care for the child or young person:

- the parent or carer's abuse of alcohol or other drugs affecting their ability to care for the child or young person or arrange for their education
- a deficiency in functional parenting skills required to provide for the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people
- the parent or caregiver is experiencing significant problems in managing the child or young person's behaviour or their engagement with any educational options
- the parent or caregiver has unrealistic expectations of age appropriate behaviour in the child or young person
- the parent is experiencing significant problems in relating to the young person

### 22.2. General indicators of abuse or neglect

**In children and young people:**

- where the child or young person gives some indication that the injury or event did not occur as stated
- where the child or young person tells you she/he has been abused
- when the child or young person tells you she /he knows someone who has been abused, may be referring to herself/himself
- someone else tells you such as a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child or young person that the child or young person may have been abused
- poor concentration
- sleeping problems, e.g. nightmares, bed wetting
- marked changes in behaviour or mood, escalation in risk-taking behaviours, tantrums, aggressiveness,

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withdrawal

- child or young person complains of stomach aches and headaches with no physical findings
- unrealistic expectations of a young person including failure to allow the young person to participate in decisions that affect them or expecting adult behaviours

### In young people:

- self-harming behaviour such as cutting or burning self
- high level of risk taking behaviours such as climbing up cliff faces while intoxicated
- substance abuse
- involvement in criminal activities such as stealing and fighting
- social isolation
- difficulty in maintaining long term peer relationships
- persistently negative themes in art work and creative writing
- homelessness

### 22.3. Indicators of neglect

#### In children and young people:

- poor standards of hygiene leading to social isolation
- scavenging or stealing food
- extended stays at school, public places, other homes
- being focused on basic survival
- extreme longing for adult affection
- flat and superficial way of relating, lacking of a sense of genuine interaction
- anxiety about being dropped or abandoned
- self-comforting behaviour, e.g. rocking, sucking
- non-organic failure to thrive
- delay in developmental milestones
- loss of "skin bloom"
- poor hair texture
- untreated physical problems

#### In young people:

- staying at the homes of friends and acquaintances for prolonged periods, rather than at home
- resources are not provided which would allow the young person to care adequately for himself or herself, e.g. access to washing or food
- exposure to serious risks through non-attendance at school e.g. crime, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse

#### In parents or carers:

- failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, hygienic home conditions or leaving the child or young person inappropriately without supervision
- inability to respond emotionally to a child or young person
- child or young person left alone for long periods
- keeping a child or young person at home from school to care for others
- depriving of or withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods
- failure to provide psychological nurturing
- one child or young person treated differently, for example, scapegoated

- absence of social support from relatives, other adults or social networks

#### **22.4. Indicators of physical abuse or ill treatment**

##### **In children and young people:**

- facial head and neck bruising
- lacerations and welts from excessive discipline or physical restraint
- explanation offered by the child or young person is not consistent with the injury
- other bruising and marks which may show the shape of the object that caused it e.g. a hand-print, buckle
- bite marks and scratches where the bruise may show a print of teeth and experts can determine whether or not it is an adult bite
- multiple injuries or bruises
- ingestion of poisonous substances, alcohol, drugs, or major trauma
- dislocations, sprains, twisting
- fractures of bones, especially in children under 3 years
- burns and scalds
- head injuries where the child or young person may have indicators of drowsiness, vomiting, fits or retinal haemorrhages suggesting the possibility of the child having been shaken

##### **In young people:**

- aggressive or violent behaviour towards others, particularly younger children
- explosive temper that is out of proportion to precipitating event
- being constantly on guard around adults and cowering at sudden movements

##### **In parents or caregiver:**

- direct admissions by parents or carers that they fear they may injure the child or young person
- family history of violence, including previous harm to children and young people
- history of their own maltreatment as a child or young person
- repeated presentations of the child or young person to health or other services with injuries, ingestions or with minor complaints
- marked delay between injury and presentation for medical assistance
- history of injury which is inconsistent with the physical findings
- history of injury which is vague, bizarre or variable

##### **Of female genital mutilation (FGM):**

- having a special operation associated with celebrations
- reluctance to be involved in sport or other physical activities when previously interested
- difficulties with toileting or menstruation
- anxiety about forthcoming school holidays or a trip to a country which practises FGM
- older siblings worried about their sisters visiting their country of origin
- long periods of sickness

#### **22.5. Indicators of psychological harm**

##### **In children and young people:**

- feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves
- inability to value others

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- lack of trust in people and expectations
- lack of interpersonal skills necessary for adequate functioning
- extreme attention seeking or risk taking behaviour
- other behavioural disorders, e.g. disruptiveness, aggressiveness, bullying

### In young people:

- avoiding all adults
- being obsessively obsequious to adults
- difficulty in maintaining long term significant relationships
- being highly self-critical

Children and young people sustain psychological harm from all types of abuse.

### In parents or carers:

- constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a child or young person, or ignoring or withholding praise and affection
- excessive or unreasonable demands
- persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse, rejection and scapegoating
- belief that a particular child or young person is bad or evil
- using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment
- situations where an adult's behaviour harms a child's or young person's safety, welfare and well-being
- exposure to domestic violence

### 22.6. Indicators of sexual abuse or ill treatment

#### In children and young people:

- describe sexual acts e.g. Daddy hurts my wee wee
- direct or indirect disclosures
- age inappropriate behaviour and/or persistent sexual behaviour
- self-destructive behaviour, drug dependence, suicide attempts, self-mutilation
- persistent running away from home
- going to bed fully clothed
- regression in developmental achievements in younger children
- child or young person being in contact with a known or suspected perpetrator of sexual assault
- unexplained accumulation of money and gifts
- bleeding from the vagina or external genitalia or anus
- injuries such as tears or bruising to the genitalia, anus or perineal region
- sexually transmitted diseases
- adolescent pregnancy
- trauma to the breast, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs

#### In young people:

- particularly negative reactions to adults of only one sex
- sexually provocative
- desexualisation, e.g. wearing baggy clothes in order to disguise gender. Eating disorders may be a possible indicator in this category
- art work or creative writing with obsessively sexual themes

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- preoccupation with causing harm to men they suspect are homosexual
- engaging in violent sexual acts and talking about these acts
- knowledge about practices and locations which are usually associated with prostitution

## 22.7. Other Considerations

**General indicators of child or young person's stress should be considered such as:**

- poor concentration at school
- sleeping/bedtime problems e.g. nightmares bed-wetting
- marked changes in behaviour or mood, tantrums, aggressiveness, withdrawal
- child complains of stomach aches and headaches with no physical findings

**Indicators in parents, carers, siblings, relatives, acquaintances or strangers:**

- exposing a child or young person to prostitution or child pornography or using a child or young person for pornographic purposes
- intentional exposure of child or young person to sexual behaviour in others
- ever committed/been suspected of child sexual abuse
- inappropriate curtailing, or jealousy regarding age appropriate development of independence from the family
- coercing child or young person to engage in sexual behaviour with other children and young people
- verbal threats of sexual abuse
- denial of adolescent's pregnancy by family
- perpetration of spouse abuse or physical child abuse

Offenders use a range of tactics including force, threats and tricks to engage children or young people in sexual contact and to try to silence the child or young person. They may also try to gain the trust and friendship of parents in order to obtain access to children and young people.

# Child Safe Environment

## Appendix 1: Recognising and Responding to Cultural Differences

### Purpose and Use of this Document:

This document is intended to be an enhancement to the College's Child Safe Environment Policy. The document will be made available to all staff in the course of their employment/involvement with the school. The contents of the document will be included as part of the College's annual review of its policies/expectations of staff in this area and will be considered as part of the annual mandatory training for all staff.

### Preface:

The Impact of Culture in teaching and learning: Culture influences how we see the world, how we see the community that we live in, and how we communicate with each other. Being a part of a culture influences our learning, remembering, talking and behaving. Therefore culture determines to a great extent the learning and teaching styles also.

Verity Christian College prides itself on providing a welcoming environment for the children of Christian families from many different Christian denominations and cultural backgrounds. Our role is to help children build their faith in the wondrous works of our Lord Jesus Christ and to see their faith as being a living one which provides a sound foundation for life. In addition, we want our students to recognise that they live in a secular world and that it is their trust in God that will help them navigate the many pathways that God will open up to them.

### Policy Response:

- Students at Verity Christian College will be taught about other cultures as a means of helping students to interact positively with people from widely varied backgrounds.
- Verity CC recognises the following as being the reasons why students should learn about other cultures;
  - Learning to Celebrate diversity which leads to cultural sensitivity and a more global awareness of humanity,
  - Develops the ability to understand issues from multiple points of view as being a vital component of critical thinking. Critical thinking skills help students apply what they have learned to take their education and use it to help make their immediate environment and the world a better place.

### Reduces Bullying:

Classrooms are made up of many different students from many diverse backgrounds. Learning about other cultures can dispel the fears and misunderstandings students may have about another culture and can lead to a reduction in bullying.

Students of other backgrounds can also have the excitement of their classmates learning about their worldview and may find ways to explain their worldview to their classmates. Learning about other cultural celebrations will bring an added measure of harmony and cohesiveness to the classroom.

It is important for students to be exposed to many different points of view to improve their relationships with their classmates and other members of their communities. Having a broad, global mindset will also help them make decisions and use the knowledge they gain to better the world.

Learning about how the world celebrates special occasions gives students the opportunity to reach out and understand the world they live in just a little better. Students deserve the gift of a broad, global learning environment, and learning about different ways of life can grant them that gift.

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## Ways to Celebrate Cultural Diversity in Your Classroom:

Staff at VCC will incorporate strategies into their teaching which will include;

- Providing materials that reflect a range of cultures and experiences.
- Allowing students to share their culture with the class.
- Getting to know our students.
- Involving families.
- Incorporating different learning styles.
- Making room for differences
- Encouraging group interactions in class
- Validating multiple perspectives in class
- Connecting school learning with real life experiences
- Holding high expectations for all students
- Showing an appreciation for different communication styles

## Further Professional Reading:

All staff will be provided with the reading entitled “Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Strategies to Boost Student Engagement”.

This will be discussed during a staff meeting during the introductory stages of the year.

# Child Safe Environment

## Appendix 2: Child Safe School Awards

Students have a responsibility to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a college environment which is safe for themselves as well as for others. Students are expected to abide by the College’s Code of Conduct and to not engage in activities which could interfere with the safety of others. Such actions could include, but are not limited to –displaying bullying behaviours, inappropriate use of equipment, venturing into out of bounds areas, using offensive language, gossiping about others, avoiding acts of physical violence, etc.

Students who make a genuine and obvious effort in a given situation to maintain the safety of themselves and others should be recognised for their actions.

If a student’s positive action is seen by a teacher or is reported to them, then the teacher will ensure that an award is created which recognises the positive actions of the student. This award will be presented at the next Chapel awards session. Examples of positive behaviour might include;

- Helping to collect/tidy equipment;
- Picking up litter;
- Watching for, and reporting trip hazards;
- Reporting a student who seems isolated/alone –not being included in actions by peers.

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What	When	Who
First Issued	July 2017	S Rand and R Bortolin
Reviewed		
Reviewed	September 2024	D Fox
Reviewed	January 2026	M Stone

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read, understood and agree to comply with the terms of the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

### References:

NSW Department of Communities and Justice

<https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au>

The Office of the Children's Guardian

<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au>

Department of Premier and Cabinet – Keep Them Safe

[www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au)