



Silver Tree
STEINER SCHOOL

Child Abduction Policy

2021

This policy applies to: Teachers, parents and students

AUTHORISED BY:	Head of School
VERSION:	Version 5
DATE:	August 2021
REVIEW:	August 2023

CONTENTS

Version Management	2
Policy	4
Related Policies	4
About Child Abduction	5
Attendance Monitoring	5
Child Abduction Response Plan	5
Communicating with Media	6
Contacting Parents	6
Record Keeping	7
Eyes on the Street	7
Contacts	7
References	8
Appendix A: Flow Chart	9
Appendix B: 'Eyes on the Street'	10
Appendix C: Sample Letter One.....	11
Appendix D: Sample Letter Two	12
Appendix E: Sample Letter Three	13

Policy

Silver Tree Steiner School considers the safety and security of its students to be of the utmost importance. When parents/guardians deliver their child to school they have an expectation that they will be protected at all times.

The Head of School is responsible for the daily management and control of the school grounds, including all persons on the premises. This is in order to provide for the safety and welfare of students and staff on the school premises.

Even though abductions from Schools are rare, it is still a risk that needs to be managed. Parents can help by keeping the School informed of any parental issues or special family arrangements and by engaging with their family and discussing personal safety. Help your younger family members with learning about the importance of making good decisions and about putting safety first. Walk with them to school, help them when crossing the road, assist them with being bus safe, alert them to dangers, and be positive with your own actions and decision making.

Related Policies

Other policies that should be read in conjunction with this policy include:

- Child Protection Policy
- Critical Incident and Emergency Management Procedures
- Family Court Orders and Violence Restraining Order Policy

About Child Abduction

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child.

Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim, such as neighbours, friends and acquaintances; and by strangers.

Attendance Monitoring

There are certain legal responsibilities involved in attendance at the School. A student may not leave the grounds for any purpose during the day without special leave from the Head of School or from those to whom he/she delegates his/her authority.

School students must be signed out by a parent / guardian at administration. All parents are asked to note the protocols relating to student absence. On the day of the absence please inform the School by writing using one of the following methods:

1. Complete an 'Absentee Form' available on the SchoolZine App (SZApp) or via the school website www.silvertree.wa.edu.au
2. Send an e-mail to the School welcome@silvertree.wa.edu.au ensuring you include the name and class of your child and the reason for absence.

Parents may be contacted should it be noted that a student is absent without permission.

Child Abduction Response Plan

Typically, this plan would be initiated by a child reporting an incident to a Teacher or a parent.

Child makes a report:

Reports may be of an attempted abduction, suspicious activity, attempted assault or actual assault, stalking behaviour (with or without a camera), or behaviour of a sexual nature such as an adult exposing themselves to the child/children.

Teacher receives the report:

The Teacher who received the report should immediately inform the Head of School, passing on all information reported by the child/children. The information would include what happened and descriptions of any persons involved. Please refer to Appendix B – 'Eyes on the Street Incident Report'. Teachers who believe that a matter is sexual in nature may also need to submit a formal Mandatory Report. **TEACHERS ARE NOT TO SPEAK WITH THE MEDIA OR WITH ANY PEOPLE NOT DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE ISSUE.**

Head of School action:

Ascertain, as best as possible or practicable, the validity of the report. The School can utilise the WA Police Facebook Page or make contact with local police to determine level of threat and gauge credibility of the report. As soon as practicable call the Police (131 444 or 000 if it is an emergency) to lodge a formal report. When an incident is reported to the Police, please ensure that an Incident Report Number or CAD Reference Number is given and noted. This will ensure that any police staff can locate the incident details.

The Head of School should ask the attending police officers if they believe that the incident

should be reported to other schools.

The school would then contact the parents if they have not already been informed.

The Chair of the School Board should also be advised of the situation. If the School deems this to be a 'critical incident' then the Department of Education must also be informed as per the Registration Standards 2020.

The Personal Assistant to the Executive Director of Association of Independent Schools – WA (AISWA), Niki Preston, also needs to be notified by email npreston@ais.wa.edu.au (cc to ndavidson@ais.wa.edu.au) so that other Head of Schools/Principals can be informed.

AISWA will assist with any calls to the Association by the Media or will, if requested, provide assistance to the School.

The School Psychologist may be contacted to assist the child/children and families concerned.

Communicating with Media

Media attention can severely inhibit Police investigations and under no circumstances should any staff discuss the matter with any form of media. It should be encouraged that the parents and child/children concerned also refrain from any discussions with the media.

The media should be referred to the Head of School to manage. If need be the Executive Director for AISWA can be contacted through the PA on 94411611 or npreston@ais.wa.edu.au for assistance in dealing with the media.

Contacting Parents

The School may need to advise the School Community of the incident by letter (see Appendix C: Sample Letter). The police have stressed that Heads of School ensure that they only use known facts. For example, a child reporting that they were approached by a stranger does not necessarily mean there was an attempted abduction. This interpretation may be incorrect and cause unnecessary alarm and fear amongst the community.

The decision to send a letter, following an attempted abduction event, is considered to be good practice by WAPOL (Western Australian Police) as it keeps parents and caregivers informed. However, it is recommended that the Head of School liaise with the investigating Police before sending a letter to the school community as this may assist in assessing the risk to others and the advice to be given to parents. Whilst the Police want parents and students to be vigilant, they do not want a letter to cause unnecessary alarm. The Head of School may not wish to send a letter home if recent events have been such that the letter would serve no real benefit and perhaps cause unnecessary fear in the school community.

PLEASER NOTE: WHEN GIVING DETAILS OF AN EVENT TO PARENTS IN A LETTER, VEHICLE REGISTRATION DETAILS MUST NOT BE PASSED ON. THESE DETAILS SHOULD ONLY BE GIVEN TO POLICE.

Finally, when a parent receives a letter about the possibility of a person approaching children, it can cause great anxiety and ongoing fear, particularly if a report is unsubstantiated. The Head of School may wish to follow up with the relevant police officer to find out the outcome of the investigation and then it may be appropriate to send parents a brief letter to provide closure about the matter. Please refer to Appendix D.

Record Keeping

Along with the notes taken by the Teacher/s and the Head of School, it is essential that schools record the name/s, contact number and incident report number, or CAD Reference Number, given when the police attend.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IN THE EVENT OF A SUCCESSFUL ABDUCTION, UNLESS A CHILD IS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM SCHOOL, THE POLICE WILL NOT ADVISE THE SCHOOL UNTIL PARENTS AND ALL OTHER RELEVANT AUTHORITIES AND AGENCIES HAVE BEEN CONTACTED.

Eyes on the Street

Appendix B – ‘Eyes on the Street Incident Report’ is a document that AISWA encourages Schools to use. The document is self-explanatory as it allows the witnesses to an event to record their recollection of both the event and the person or persons involved. The Head of School would be responsible for sending the Incident Report/s to Crime Stoppers. The Head of School, or delegate, should still contact the Police if the School believes that the matter requires Police intervention. Please note that training in the use of the ‘Eyes on the Street Incident Report’ is required and schools may contact WAPOL as per the contact details to follow.

Contacts

Queries regarding these guidelines may be directed to:

- AISWA: 9441 1600.
- Senior Sergeant Mark Fleskens
State Coordinator Community Engagement Division: 9222 1063.
- Sergeant Garry Corker, Police Education Liaison Officer, Community Engagement Division
garry.corker@police.wa.gov.au or Garry.Corker@education.wa.edu.au / 9264 4531.

References

AISWA Child Abduction Response Plan; Policy and Procedure Guidelines

Available: <https://www.ais.wa.edu.au/policy-and-procedure-guidelines>

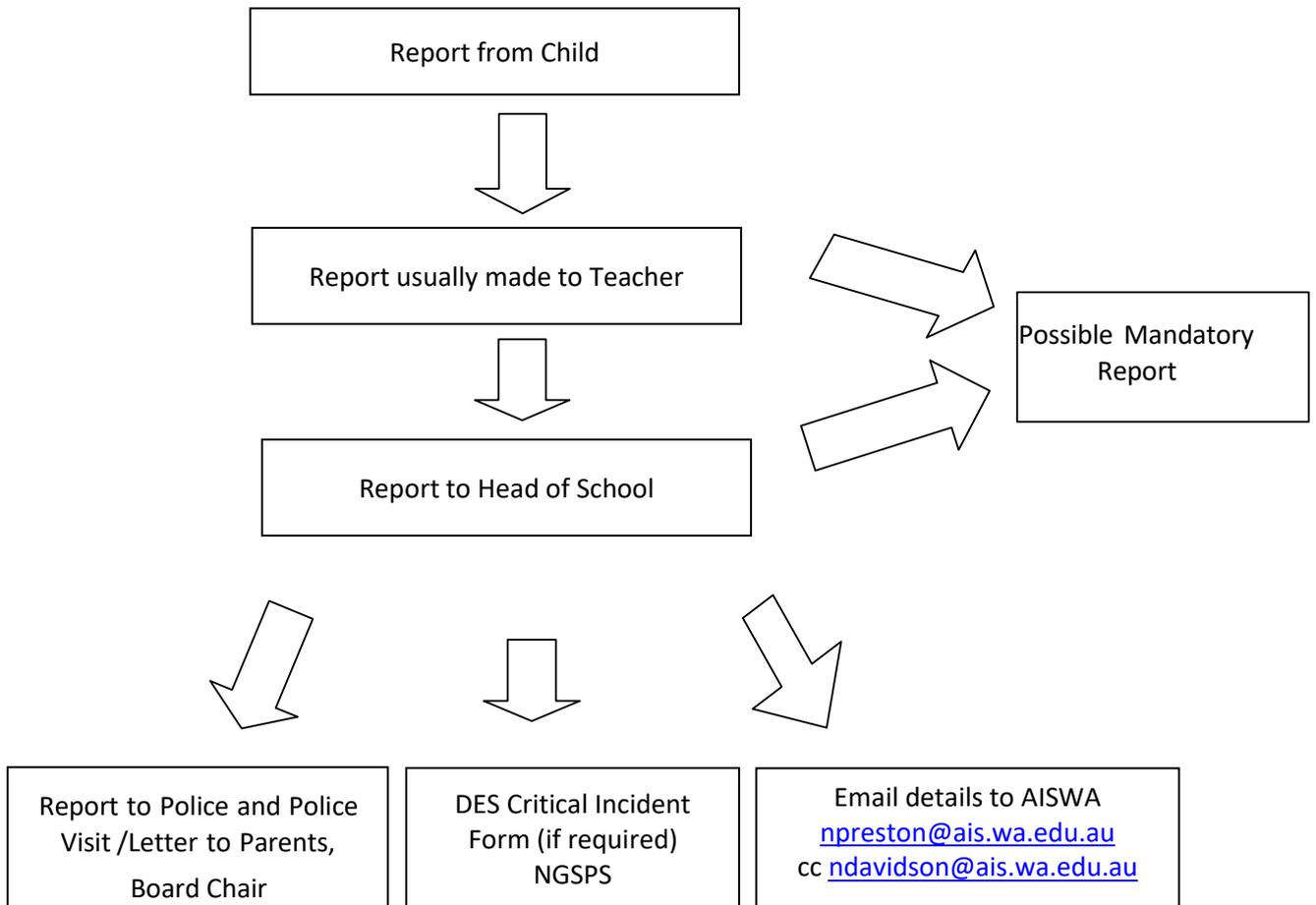
Action Against Abduction Organisation

Available: <http://www.actionagainstabduction.org/about-abduction/>

Appendix A: Flow Chart

FLOW CHART

Process to be followed in
Child Abduction Response Plan



Appendix C: Sample Letter One

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to inform parents and carers about a reported incident in the nearby community.

Edit the following paragraph as needed:

A student from our school / OR another local school (please do not name the school) reported that on the way to school on [day date] / OR on the way home from school on [day date] a male person / female person was acting suspiciously in the area of [street name/area]. The matter has been reported to police.

[Principals to note – do not include specific details of the incident such as number plates and identifying details of individuals unless you are specifically asked to do so by WA Police. Otherwise, police investigations and cases may be compromised.]

In light of this reported incident I urge all children to take care when going to and from school, and to report anything suspicious to their parents, the school and the police

You can call **13 14 44** to report an incident to WA Police (only use 000 in an emergency) or **1800 333 000** to reach Crime Stoppers.

Here are some suggestions to help your children stay safe:

Always travel in a group

Walk on the right hand side of the road to face oncoming traffic

Wherever possible, leave space between you and the roadway

Stay in areas that are well lit

Stay in view – avoid going into areas that are hidden (such as parkland bush or behind shopping centres).

Be alert – earphones and headphones can reduce your awareness considerably

If you have a mobile phone, have it turned on and ready to dial an emergency number

If a passing car stops nearby, never get too close

Run from a situation if you feel at risk

Give this advice to your brothers and sisters, especially if they are younger

Report suspicious behaviour to your parents, school and the police

If you can get it safely, try to photograph or remember the number plate of the car

Report numbers plates of cars and the clothing or distinguishing features of individuals to police.

To get the latest community safety information from police, visit WA Police on Facebook www.facebook.com/WA.Police or online at www.police.wa.gov.au.

If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact me at school.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Head of School

Appendix D: Sample Letter Two

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to give you further information following the recent letter/report of a student/s being approached by a person/vehicle near our school on <date> and in <location>.

As you know, we take all reports like this very seriously in the first instance and notify parents and, if necessary, the Police.

In this case, the Police have investigated the report/s and I am happy to say that they have advised me there is no information about this matter that suggests there is an ongoing threat to the children/students in our school.

If you have any queries regarding this matter, do not hesitate to contact the School or discuss your concerns with your child's teacher.

Yours faithfully,

Head of School

Appendix E: Sample Letter Three

(At the commencement of the new school year)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

With the beginning of the school year it is timely to remind students about Stranger Danger to and from school. Students need to let a trusted adult know of any concerns they might have as soon as possible.

Here are some suggestions for parents to talk about with your child for them to feel safe:

- Be alert - headphones and earphones can reduce your awareness considerably
- Stay in view –avoid going into areas that are hidden (such as parkland bush or behind shopping centres)
- If a passing car stops nearby, never get too close
- Run from a situation if you feel at risk
- Wherever possible leave space between you and the roadway
- Report suspicious behaviour to your parents, school and the police.

If you have any queries regarding these suggested Stranger Danger Safety Behaviours, please do not hesitate to contact the School or discuss your concerns with your child's class or form teacher.

Yours faithfully,

Head of School

(AISWA wishes to acknowledge Ms Jo Burns, Deputy Principal Georgiana Molloy Anglican School for the content of this appendix)