



SILVER TREE STEINER SCHOOL

Child Abduction Response Procedures

2024

This policy applies to: Teachers, parents and students

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Silver Tree Steiner School is committed to being a Child Safe Organisation, taking a preventative and participatory stance on child protection issues and promoting a child safe environment based on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

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Policy

At Silver Tree Steiner School, the safety and well-being of our students are our top priorities. When parents and guardians drop off their children, they trust that we will keep them safe.

The Head of School oversees the daily operations and management of the school grounds, striving to create a safe environment for everyone.

While incidents of abduction are very rare, we recognize the importance of being prepared. Parents can help by keeping us informed about any family situations that may affect their child and by discussing personal safety at home.

Encouraging younger family members to make safe choices is essential. Walk with them to school, help them cross the street safely, and remind them about bus safety. Positive role modelling goes a long way in teaching them how to stay safe. Together, we can create a secure and supportive environment for all students.

About Child Abduction

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from their parent or anyone else with legal responsibility for the child. In the context of a school, this would refer to situations where a student is taken without consent during school hours, from school property or during offsite school activities such as school excursions or camps.

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 their delegate.

If leaving before the end of day, students must be signed out by a parent / guardian at Reception.

All parents/guardians are asked to familiarise themselves with the protocols relating to student absence in the school's *Attendance Policy*, available on our website. Parents may be contacted should it be noted that a student is absent without permission or notification.

Related Policies

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

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Conduct for Parents
- Critical Incident and Emergency Management Procedures
- Records Management Policy
- Family Court Orders and Violence Restraining Order Policy
- Duty of Care Policy

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. (Refer to 'Eyes on the Street' page 6).
- 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. Contact local police to determine the level of threat and gauge credibility of the report (Ph: 131 444 or 000 if it is an emergency)
- Lodge a formal report (Ph: 131 444 or 000 if it is an emergency). When an incident is reported to the police, please ensure that you are provided with an Incident Report Number or CAD Reference Number. This will ensure that any police staff can locate the incident details in the future.
- The Head of School should ask the attending police officers if they believe that the incident should be reported to other schools.
- The school should then contact the parents if they have not already been informed.
- The Chairperson of the School Board should also be advised of the situation. If the school deems this to be a 'Reportable Incident' then the Director General must also be notified as per Registration Standards requirements.
- 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.
- The Head of School may also need to advise the school community of the incident by letter (see Appendix B for example)

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.

The media should be referred to the Head of School to manage. If needed, AISWA can be contacted for assistance in dealing with the media (Ph: 9441 1600).

AISWA recommends that Schools **do not** make the first contact with the media.

Contacting Parents

AISWA recommends a letter be sent to all children's homes in the event of an attempted or successful abduction of a child. The letter should be sent by email and not SMS or other brief communication tools. (see *Appendix B* for sample letters to parents)

The sample letter in Appendix B has been designed by the WA Police, in consultation with DoE, CEWA and AISWA and contains protective behaviour messages.

Whilst the police want parents and students to be vigilant, they do not want a letter to cause unnecessary alarm. The introduction must be sensitive to the effect it will have on parents and children in the school.

The police have stressed that the Head of School should ensure 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 as it keeps parents and caregivers informed. However, it is a school decision as to whether their community requires notice of an event.

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. For example, if other similar letters have been sent home in the recent past, a second letter may not only cause unnecessary fear but also the reporting by students of all "strangers" and slowly moving vehicles as attempted abductions (even vehicles travelling at the required 40km/h near a school).

It is recommended that the Head of School liaises with the investigating police, once they have spoken to the child/children, before sending a letter to the school community. This may assist them in assessing the risk to others and the advice they give to parents. Note that when giving details of an event to parents in a letter that vehicle registration details **must not be passed on**. These details should only be given to the 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 C*.

Record Keeping

Along with all 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.

Should the incident result in a Mandatory Report being submitted, records should be retained securely in line with the school's *Records Management Policy*.

Eyes on the Street

The 'Eyes on the Street' website and app is a Crime Stoppers reporting vehicle that AISWA encourages schools to use. The app is easy to use, and 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 is 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. Schools may contact WAPOL as per the contact details on page 7.

'Eyes on the Street' app can be accessed via the school iPads, or online:

<https://www.crimestopperswa.com.au/report/>

Contacts

Queries regarding these guidelines may be directed to:

- AISWA: 9441 1600.
- WAPOL <https://www.police.wa.gov.au/>
- WAPOL <https://www.facebook.com/WA.Police>

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

Child Abduction Response Plan

Abduction/Attempted Abduction/Suspicious Activity/Attempted or Actual Assault/Stalking Behaviour/Behaviour of Sexual Nature

Child makes a report to a teacher



Teacher must inform the Head of School



Reporting Requirements

Was the incident sexual in nature? If yes, lodge a Mandatory Report.

Reportable Incident? If yes, HOS to notify Director General as per NGRS registration standards requirement.

Head of School

1. In order:

- Contact police
- Lodge formal report
- Contact parents
- Notify Board Chairperson
- Fulfil required reporting obligations as outlined in Reporting Requirements above

2. Liaise with police, and if appropriate:

- Send a letter home to parents
- Report incident to other schools

3. Organise AISWA School Psychology Service to assist families concerned.

Appendix B: Sample Letter One

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 Crime Stoppers **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 number 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 C: Sample Letter One

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,

Name

Head of School