SILVER TREE
STEINER SCHOOL

Child Protection Policy

2026

This policy applies to: Teachers, Staff, Board Members and Volunteers

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Relevant Legislation

- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Criminal Code Act (1913)
- Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006 (changes to s204B of the Criminal Code)
- Working with Children (Screening) Act 2004
- Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Bill 2021
- Teacher Registration Act 2012
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Related Policies

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

- Duty of Care Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff, Board of Governors, Contractors and Volunteers
- Behaviour Development Policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy

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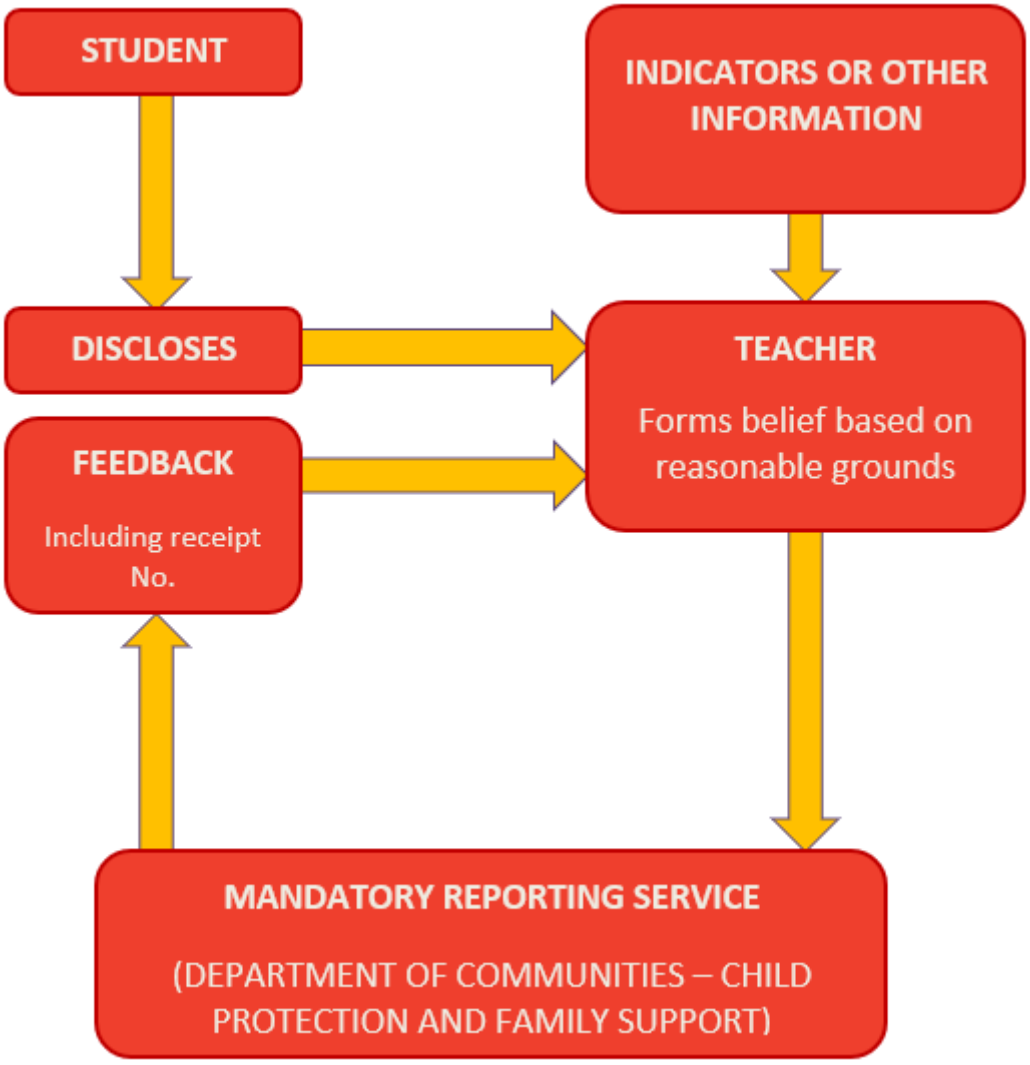
FLOW CHART - MANDATORY REPORTING PROCEDURE

For reporting Child Sexual Abuse

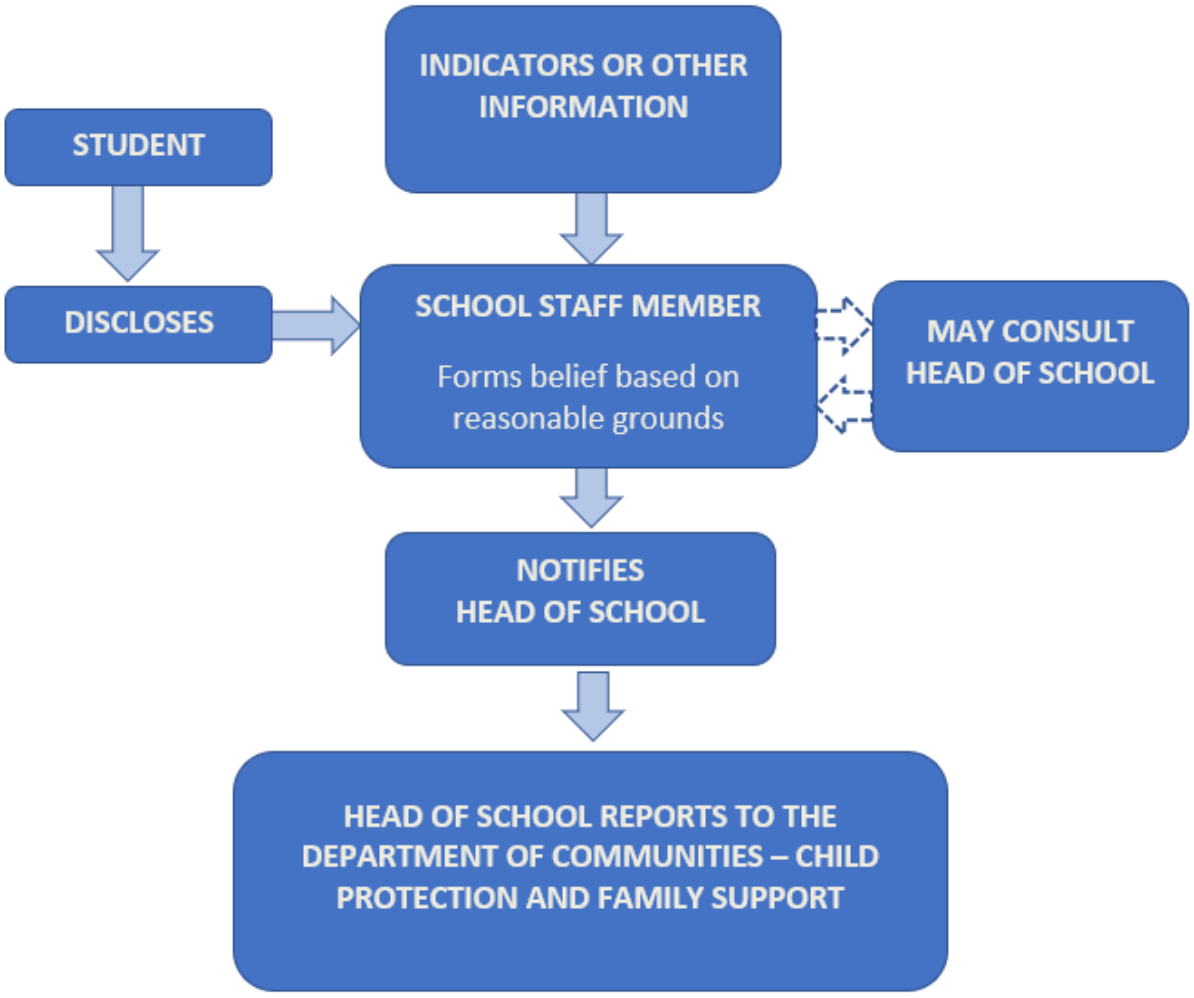
MANDATORY NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE



FLOW CHART - NON-MANDATORY REPORTING

For physical, emotional, psychological abuse and neglect

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
(NON-MANDATORY REPORT)



Child Protection Policy

Silver Tree Steiner School is committed to providing a child safe environment and actively implements the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (*see Appendix A*). Children have a right to feel safe at school and in the wider community. The Head of School, all school employees and volunteers at the Silver Tree Steiner School have a duty of care to children, ensuring their safety and protection. Silver Tree Steiner School explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment as defined on pages 6-7 of this policy. This responsibility extends to the identification and timely response to concerns regarding the possible sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect of a child.

Silver Tree has a special responsibility to protect children when they are on school premises and also to intervene when they believe the welfare of a child is at risk outside the school. Every member of the School community has an important role in the identification and reporting of child abuse and the provision of support and assistance to children who have been abused.

This policy recognises that the best interests of children will be met by collaborating with or engaging the expertise of government agencies or non-government departments in accordance with the protocols recommended by these bodies.

*Please refer to *Appendix B: Child Safe Statement of Commitment.*

Human Resources Practices

When staff have been assessed as suitable for employment, reference checks must be carefully carried out before the applicant is formally offered the position. These reference checks must be done by contacting the referee verbally. Applicants should provide at least two suitable referees who can be contacted in this way.

- All school employees must have a current Working with Children (WWC) Check, a copy of which is to be kept in their staff file. If a current WWC Check is not available, evidence of having applied for a current WWC Check must be provided within 5 business days of having started employment with the School.
- Before expiration of the WWCC another application must be submitted, and proof provided to the School Officer.
- Any changes that would impact on a person's ability to obtain a WWC Check must be reported to the Head of School immediately.
- All ancillary staff must supply a current National Police Clearance, or receipt of application, upon commencement of employment.
- All teaching staff, including relief teachers, must hold current registration with the TRBWA. Registration details will be recorded in staff files and applicable registers.
- Volunteers involved in child-related work are required to undergo a WWC Check unless they have a child enrolled at Silver Tree Steiner School (STSS). All volunteers on overnight excursions must have a current WWC Check even if they have a child enrolled at STSS. Volunteers are not to be alone with children. A copy of current volunteer WWC Checks will be filed at reception.
- It is the responsibility of the volunteer to advise the School should a matter arise that would affect their application for a WWC Check. This includes advising the School if an Assessment Notice is received regarding the application.
- The school will organise regular training sessions for staff on Child Protection: Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse, Grooming and Child Abuse Prevention by all Staff, to be run by an accredited outside organisation and must sign annually the register acknowledging their

understanding of their requirements for reporting.

TRBWA

A review of the Teachers Registration Act has resulted in changes to obligations that are placed on employers to provide notification to the Teachers Registration Board in certain circumstances.

Under Section 42 of the Teacher Registration Act, the employer is required to notify the TRBWA of any investigation where an opinion is formed that a teacher has engaged in serious misconduct or has been seriously incompetent, and that investigation results in that teacher:

- being suspended or dismissed from teaching at the school; or
- resigning from or no longer teaching at the school.

The TRBWA must be notified as soon as possible, within 7 days of the teacher having ceased teaching at the school, even if an investigation is ongoing or not finalised.

As soon as an employer forms a suspicion that serious misconduct or incompetence has occurred AND the teacher is dismissed, suspended, resigns or ceases teaching at the educational institution the 7-day period commences.

Definitions

Child Abuse and Neglect

Child maltreatment refers to any non-accidental behaviour by adults or children that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of harm to a child or young person. The behaviours may be intentional or unintentional. (AIFS-What is child abuse and neglect)

It may be the result of action or inaction on the part of a person who has responsibility to care for a child resulting in harm or injury to the child. The harm may include delayed physical and/or intellectual development. The maltreatment experienced is normally described in five categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators.

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional, including Psychological Neglect
- Educational Neglect
- Family and domestic violence

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child has experienced severe and/or persistent ill-treatment. It can include, but is not limited to injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and fractures caused by a range of acts including beating, shaking, illicit administration of alcohol and other drugs, attempted suffocation, excessive discipline, physical punishment or other forms.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse covers a wide range of behaviour or activities that expose or subject a child to sexual activity that is exploitative and/or inappropriate to his/her age and developmental level. These behaviours include observation or involvement with inappropriate fondling of a child's body, making a child touch an adult's genitalia, showing pornographic material or sexual acts to a child, and sexual penetration of the child. Harm from sexual abuse may include significant emotional trauma, physical injury, infections and impaired emotional and psychological development.

Sexual abuse is defined by the Act in section 124A as:

- 'Sexual abuse' in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where:
- The child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; or
- The child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
- There is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.

This legislation is not intended to capture all sexual activity involving children and young people. Reference should be made to consent laws in Western Australia, The Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 section 320-322.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, belittling, teasing, humiliating, bullying, confusing, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to have a reduced capacity to experience a range of emotions, to express emotion appropriately and to modulate their emotional experience. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to be fearful, withdrawn and/or resentful, distressed and despairing.

Included under emotional abuse is psychological abuse. This abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, attention, imagination and moral development. Children are likely to feel worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered or only of value in meeting another's needs.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a parent/caregiver to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. These include adequate supervision, adequate food or shelter, suitable clothing, effective medical, therapeutic or remedial care and emotional security. Neglect can be acute, chronic or episodic, and can result in detrimental effects on the child or young person's social psychological, educational or physical development and/or physical injury. Neglect should be considered in the context of physical, emotional or psychological abuse.

Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive but contains those that will be of most use to staff. Referenced from AISWA guidelines which refers to, "*Identifying and responding to child abuse and neglect – A Guide for Professionals"*.

Students frequently show indicators from more than one category; and the examples listed are not necessarily exclusive to a single category of abuse. Any of these indicators may suggest that a student is being abused, neglected or at risk of harm; however, indicators should be considered in the context of the student's age, medical and developmental history, and capabilities. In addition, mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence within families must also be considered.

The single most helpful item for staff to consider is the deviation from normal or baseline behaviour of a child. A child who has been abused experiences mixed emotional and physical responses to abuse and may well be confused by the disconnect between respect/love for the abuser and abhorrence or ambivalence to the abuse itself.

Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse in children:

- broken bones or unexplained bruises, burns, or welts in various stages of healing;
- the child or young person is unable to explain an injury, or explanations given are inconsistent, vague or bizarre;
- direct admissions from the parents that they are concerned that they might harm their child;
- a history of family violence;
- marked delay between injury and obtaining medical assistance;
- a parent who shows little concern about the welfare of their child or the treatment and care of the injury;
- repeated presentations of the child to health services with injuries, ingestions or minor complaints (this could also be an indicator of Factitious Disorder by proxy, a rare expression of physical and emotional abuse);
- the child or young person is unusually frightened of a parent or carer, or is afraid to go home;
- the child or young person reports intentional injury by their parent or carer;
- arms and legs are kept covered by inappropriate clothing in warm conditions;
- ingestion of poisonous substances including alcohol or drugs;
- the avoidance of physical contact by the child (particularly with a parent or carer).

Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse in children:

- sexualised behaviours inappropriate to their age (including sexually touching other children and themselves);
- knowledge of sexual behaviour inappropriate to their years;
- disclosure of abuse either directly or indirectly through drawings, play or writing that describes abuse;
- pain or bleeding in the anal or genital area with redness or swelling;
- fear of being alone with a particular person;
- a child or young person implying that he/she is required to keep secrets;
- the presence of sexually transmitted disease;
- sudden unexplained fears;
- enuresis and/or encopresis (bed-wetting and bed soiling).

Emotional or Psychological abuse could be when:

- the parent or carer constantly criticises, threatens, belittles, insults, or rejects the child or young person with no evidence of love, support, or guidance;
- the child or young person exhibits extremes in behaviour from overly aggressive to overly passive;
- delayed physical, emotional, or intellectual development;
- compulsive lying and stealing;
- high levels of anxiety;
- lack of trust in people;
- feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves;
- eating hungrily or hardly at all;
- uncharacteristic seeking of attention or affection;
- reluctance to go home;
- rocking, sucking thumbs or self-harming behaviour;
- fearfulness when approached by a person known to them.

Neglect may be:

- signs of malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food;
- poor hygiene: matted hair, dirty skin or severe body odour;
- unattended physical or medical problems;
- the child or young person states that no one is home to provide care (inadequate supervision, failure to ensure safety);
- child or young person appears constantly tired;
- frequent lateness to school or absence from school;
- inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter;
- alcohol and/or drug abuse present in the household;
- frequent illness, low grade infections or sores;
- hunger.

Responsibility of Staff Members in Recognising and Notifying Child Abuse and Neglect

Step 1

The Board of Governors requires all staff to inform the Head of School if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a student under the age of 18 years has experienced any form of abuse or neglect or is at risk of abuse or neglect. All staff must comply with the direction to inform the Head of School about all forms of abuse except in the case of Sexual Abuse in which the teacher must follow the provisions of the Mandatory Reporting legislation (see *Mandatory Reporting Procedure*).

All staff should have a knowledge of:

a) The injuries, behaviours and presentations which may indicate that a child is being abused or neglected.
b) The necessary procedures to follow if staff suspect abuse or neglect, and;
c) Appropriate ways to support children who are victims of abuse.

It is not the role of the teacher to investigate child abuse or neglect matters. The Teacher's observations or the child's disclosure should be discussed, in the first instance, with the Head of School, or the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, if it is not appropriate to discuss it with the Head of School. The Teacher and Head of School may wish to consult with AISWA's School Psychology Service.

Step 2

If the Head of School forms a belief based on reasonable grounds to suspect that a student under the age of 18 years has experienced any form of abuse or neglect or is at risk of abuse or neglect (other than sexual abuse: refer to *Mandatory Reporting Procedure*) then the Head of School will notify the Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support (DCCPFS) **through the Central Intake Team on 1800 273 889.**

Where the Head of School has formed a belief that the child is at imminent risk of being abused, they should consider calling the Western Australian Police first, through 000.

Mandatory Reporting

In the context of Silver Tree Steiner School, Mandatory Reporters at Silver Tree are Teachers registered with the TRBWA.

In cases of suspected sexual abuse (past and/or current), the mandatory reporter is required to make a report to the Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support (DCCPFS) through the Mandatory Reporting Service.

If the Mandatory Reporter concerned wishes, they may include the Head of School and other relevant staff in discussions relating to a specific child prior to the teacher forming a belief based on reasonable grounds. **If either of those parties are mandated reporters and then personally form a belief, they are then legally obliged to make a report to the Mandatory Reporting Service.**

Failure to make a report can incur the maximum penalty of $6,000.

Reports by those employees who are not mandated should be made to the Head of School. In the case where it is believed the Head of School may somehow be complicit or obstructionist, the report should be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors

Primary Education Assistants, Office Staff and Volunteers are examples of people who work with children in our school that are not mandated reporters. However, all people working with children, whether mandatory reporters or not, should continue to report reasonable beliefs about all forms of abuse. These people who work with children also have a great knowledge of the children in their care and can be included in the consultative process with the Teacher or Head of School in the case of sexual abuse.

A mandatory reporter can form the necessary belief, based on reasonable grounds, by noting the presence of indicators, disclosures, injuries, signs, symptoms and behaviours that heighten concerns about child sexual abuse. Information on the indicators of sexual abuse is covered in the '*Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect* Section' of this document.

Mandatory Reporters may wish to consider the following questions to assist them in deciding if their belief is based on reasonable grounds:

- Can you describe the reasons why you believe a child has been, or is being sexually abused?
- What has the child said or done to suggest they are being sexual abused?
- Have you observed, or been told about, the presence of any of the 'possible indicators' of sexual abuse?
- Did the child disclose sexual abuse? What did they say happened? Who did they disclose to and when?
- What other behaviours have you observed and/or interactions with the child are of concern to you? What is the frequency and severity of the behaviour? How long has it been occurring?

If a mandatory reporter is unsure if they should make a report or not, they may phone the Central Intake Team at DCCPFS on 1800 273 889 for advice.

Mandatory Reporting Procedure

Step 1

A centralised Mandatory Reporting Service has been established to receive all reports of child sexual abuse in Western Australia. This service is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

By contacting the 24/7 Mandatory Reporting Service on 1800 708 704 you can:

- report immediate concerns for the safety of a child.
- discuss with a specialist in child protection any grounds on which you have formed a belief that a child has been or is currently being sexually abused.
- seek advice on reporting procedures.

The preferred reporting method is online via the Mandatory Reporting Web Portal: https://mandatoryreportingweb.communities.wa.gov.au/

When making a mandatory report via the MR Web Portal, the user will be guided through the system to assist with providing the required information to the Mandatory Reporting Service.

A blank mandatory reporting form can be requested from the Mandatory Reporting Service to be sent via fax or email if you cannot access the MR Web Portal. Completed forms can be emailed to mrs@communities.wa.gov.au or faxed to (08) 6414 7316.

An oral report can be made if you believe that the child is at immediate risk, but this must be followed by a written report as soon as practicable (preferably within 24 hours) after the oral report is made in accordance with section 124C (1) Children and Community Services Act 2004. **Failure to submit the written report is an offence with a $3,000 fine**.

A report is to contain:

Under section 124C of the Children and Community Services Act 2004, a mandatory report must contain the following information:

- the reporter's name and contact details
- the name of the child, or, if this cannot be obtained after reasonable inquiries, a description of the child, and
- the grounds on which the reporter believes that the child has been the subject of sexual abuse or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse.

The following information must also be provided to the extent that it is known:

- the child's date of birth
- where the child lives
- the names of the child's parents or other appropriate persons (e.g., adult relative or person who the child usually lives with), and
- the name of the person alleged responsible, their contact details and their relationship to the child

Other Important Information:

When a report is made, the following may be useful for DCCPFS and WA Police Force in undertaking an assessment and/or investigation; therefore, please provide as much detail as possible in the following areas:

- the child's current whereabouts
- all telephone numbers linked to the child, caregivers and/or the child's current address
- the child's school, day care centre or kindergarten
- the child's cultural background
- whether the child has a disability or additional needs
- whether the child or family needs an interpreter

- the child's family arrangements, such as siblings and carers
- whether the person alleged to be responsible for the sexual abuse has threatened to further harm the child
- whether the child and the child's family/carers are aware of the report
- the context of the disclosure
- if the child has disclosed abuse, what they said happened and who they disclosed to and when
- a description of any behaviours/interactions with the child that are of concern, including frequency and severity of behaviours
- whether the child has any injury, or medical needs.

Where a teacher has formed a belief that the child is at imminent risk of being abused, they should consider calling the Western Australian Police first, on 000. This does not fulfil the legal obligation to report a child sexual abuse belief and the individual who has formed the belief should then make a Mandatory Report (MR), which can be completed via the following link:

https://mandatoryreportingweb.communities.wa.gov.au

After a report is lodged, the sender will receive a standardised letter. This letter is proof that a report has been made, so it is important that the response is retained and securely stored.

Important Note: To avoid interfering with any investigative process initiated by DCCPFS or the Police, all strong concerns for the welfare of children believed maltreated by parents/caregivers must be discussed with the DCCPFS or the Police **before** advising parents/caregivers. These agencies will then decide on the provision of advice to parents/caregivers and any further action. Police and DCCPFS are available to provide advice on child abuse concerns.

Non-Mandatory Reporting Procedure

Step 2

If, following a report, a family approaches the school to receive support for their child, it is recommended that any interview be conducted with a minimum of 2 school members present (Head of School and one other) to provide support.

In cases of child sexual abuse, the legislation provides protection for the person reporting. Disclosure of the reporter's identity or identifying information to parents or any other party can incur a fine of $24,000 and two years' imprisonment.

Step 3

The Head of School will arrange ongoing support for the teacher, the student and anyone else affected. The need for ongoing support is often necessary as the teacher will continue in their role with the student and the DCCPFS' role may continue for an extended period of time.

Response to Disclosure of Abuse or Neglect

There may be times when a student makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect. Mandatory Reporters are required by law to make reports when they have a reasonable belief that sexual abuse is occurring or has occurred. For other forms of child abuse mandatory reporting is not a requirement, however, schools have a duty of care and a moral obligation to follow the recommended procedures in cases of suspected child abuse. Staff cannot agree to a student's demands for confidentiality or requests that parents, police or other agencies not be informed when the welfare or safety of the student or other students may be threatened.

If receiving a disclosure of abuse or neglect from a student, staff should be aware of the immediate needs of these students and what to do in these circumstances.

- Use 'protective interrupting' if students begin to disclose in class or in a public area to protect them from sharing the information with too many other people:
    - Acknowledge that you have heard them and stop them from disclosing any further;
    - Be supportive and gently indicate that they might tell you about it in a more private situation; and
- Quietly arrange to see them as soon as possible, in a situation away from other students.
- Establish clear limits on confidentiality by telling the child that a report will be made to a person who will be able to provide help and protection and that you will help them throughout the process;
- Put your own feelings aside and listen as if the information is not sensational;
- Provide reassurance that you believe them, that it is right to tell and do not think that they are to blame or make judgements about what has happened;
- Listen to students in a private location within the school;
- Be supportive and understanding;
- Be empathetic to student feelings;
- Acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such things;
- Try to identify students' fears;
- Let students tell the event in their own words;
- If you are unable to answer all the questions of the child, it is OK to let them know;
- Once you have established that they have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed, do not pursue the conversation any further. This is important to ensure that questions cannot be raised later about possible manipulation of the disclosure;
- Allow students the option of support during any agency interview and reassure them of the availability of continuing support;
- Document the conversation that you have had remembering as accurately as you can, the words and phrases used by the child to describe what has happened to them;
- Document the disclosure and subsequent discussion and actions;
- Explain what will happen next; and
- Try and stay with the student after the disclosure to provide a sense of security until necessary steps have been taken to ensure the safety and support.

Staff must be mindful they:

- Do not push for details or conduct an investigation. Other agencies have this responsibility;
- Do not express judgement of the student, perpetrator or family;
- Never get angry, upset or show shock;
- Never ask questions that may make the child feel guilty or inadequate;
- Never ask leading questions, for instance 'Did Daddy hit you?'
- Don't put words in students' mouths or interrogate as this could jeopardise the interviewing process of DCCPFS and Police;
- Don't promise not to tell when there are clear limits on confidentiality;
- Never make false promises;
- Don't give a lecture about right and wrong;
- Don't say 'forget it', 'you'll get over it' or other such minimalising statements;
- Don't give excessive pity; or
- Respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and do not share the information with anyone other than the Head of School and either the DCCPFS or the Police. This includes not engaging in general staffroom discussion about the disclosure.

Staff must be aware that a disclosure can arouse in them strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness. It is important to control these feelings; they can be worked through after the disclosure.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme (the Scheme) compels the Head of School to notify allegations of, or convictions for, child abuse by their **current employees** to the Ombudsman and then investigate these allegations. The Ombudsman will monitor, oversee and review these investigations.

Employees include the following persons who are over 18 years of age:

- paid employees;
- volunteers;
- contractors;
- service providers.

The Scheme implements key recommendations of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* and provides that child abuse in organisations will always be:

- notified to an impartial and independent body;
- investigated fully; and
- dealt with to ensure children are protected from abuse within institutions.

Under the Scheme, 'reportable allegations' and 'reportable convictions' need to be notified to the Head of School.

A **reportable allegation** is any information that leads a person to form the belief on reasonable grounds that a current employee of an organisation covered by the Scheme has engaged in reportable conduct or conduct that **may** involve reportable conduct.

A **reportable conviction** is a conviction for an offence of a sexual nature committed against, with, or in the presence of a child.

Reportable conduct includes:

- sexual offences (an offence of a sexual nature under a law of Western Australia, another state/territory, or the Commonwealth committed against, with or in the presence of a child);
- sexual misconduct (includes misconduct against, with or in the presence of, a child that is sexual in nature but does not include a sexual offence.);
- physical assault (the intentional or reckless application of physical force without lawful justification or excuse; or any act that intentionally or recklessly causes another person to apprehend immediate and unlawful violence.);
- other prescribed offences;
- significant neglect of a child; and
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.
- conduct:
    - Whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the conduct has commenced or concluded; and
    - Whether the conduct occurred before, on or after commencement of the Scheme.

The **Head of School** is required to notify the Ombudsman if they become aware of a reportable allegation, or conviction made against one of their current employees, contractors or volunteers, regardless of whether:

- The alleged conduct occurred before or during, the person's employment with, or engagement by, the organisation; or
- The alleged conduct occurred outside of the person's role with the organisation; or
- The alleged conduct occurred prior to the commencement of the Scheme.

The Scheme does not cover historical conduct of **former** employees.

The obligations of the Head of School can be summarised as follows:

- Ensure the School has systems in place to prevent reportable conduct and which enable the reporting, notification and investigation of allegations or convictions of child abuse by employees, appropriate action if a finding of reportable conduct is made and the receipt, handling and disclosure of investigation information.
- Notify the Ombudsman with **7 working days** of becoming aware of a reportable allegation or conviction.
- Investigate the allegation or conviction of reportable conduct.
- Advise the Ombudsman of the investigator and their contact details.
- Notify the Ombudsman of certain matters affecting the investigation, such as if another appropriate person or body (eg WA Police) is investigating the matter.
- Report the outcome of the investigation to the Ombudsman, including findings, submissions from the employee and any actions taken or proposed to be taken (or reasons if no action taken).
- To minimise the impact on children and ensure criminal investigations or other high priority investigations are not compromised, the Ombudsman or the Head of School may:
    - Suspend the reportable conduct investigation or finding and take steps to manage any risks while it is suspended;
    - Consult with police or another body undertaking a concurrent investigation about the suspension and management of risks; and
    - If the Ombudsman or the Head of School decide not to suspend the investigation, ensuring it is conducted in a way that will not compromise the police or another investigation.

- If the Head of School suspends the investigation, they must inform the Ombudsman of the suspension and steps taken to manage risk; and
- The Head of School may also seek an exemption from an investigation either permanently or for a defined period; and
- provide a report to the Ombudsman on the outcome of the investigation.

These reporting requirements are **in addition to** other child protection reporting obligations. Where there is an obligation to do so, other relevant bodies must be notified of allegations of child abuse (eg WA Police Force, Department of Communities).

The Bill provides mechanisms to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication of investigations, including interviewing vulnerable children. These mechanisms include providing for consultation and sharing of information between the Ombudsman and other investigatory or oversight bodies, such as the WA Police Force. It also includes the capacity for the Ombudsman to exempt a matter, or an organisation from an investigation where appropriate, including that it is being investigated by another appropriate person or body.

How to Make a Report Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme

An employee **must** report reportable allegations or reportable convictions they become aware of to the head of school as soon as practicable.

Any other person, including contractors and volunteers, **may** report to the Head of School, a 'reportable allegation' or 'reportable conviction' involving a current employee of the school, and are encouraged to do so.

It's possible to make an anonymous report to the Head of School. The preferred method is from a 'dummy' email account, so that further information can be obtained if necessary to investigate the claim. However, other methods of contact will be accepted.

The Head of School can be contacted via phone, email or post:

Head of School:	Anna Brindal
Phone:	(08) 9295 4787
Email:	anna.brindal@silvertree.wa.edu.au
Post:	Silver Tree Steiner School 695 Roland Road Parkerville WA 6081

For any 'reportable allegation' or 'reportable conviction' involving the Head of School, the person reporting should notify the Ombudsman directly. The Ombudsman can be contacted for clarification and guidance, and to talk through any issues of concern.

- Telephone: 9220 7471
- Email: reportableconduct@ombudsman.wa.gov.au
- Website: www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au

The following is a summary of the information to be provided to the Ombudsman by the Head of School:

Notification of reportable allegation or reportable conviction	Details of investigator	Outcomes of investigation	Additional documents
• Details of organisation • Details of the employee who is the subject of the reportable allegation or conviction • Details of the reportable allegation or reportable conviction • Actions taken to protect children **Within 7 working days[1]**	• Name and contact details of the investigator[2] **As soon as practicable**	Written report setting out: • Findings of investigation • Reasons for findings • Any submissions from the employee (see section on obligations to employee below) • Disciplinary action taken, or the reason why no action taken • Any action taken to prevent further reportable conduct • Any other relevant information **As soon as practicable after investigation**	• Notification of matters affecting investigation[3] • The Ombudsman may request further documents from the head of the organisation

Protective Behaviours Education for Children in the Curriculum

The school curriculum covers a comprehensive, realistic and age-appropriate personal safety component enabling students to recognise and report abuse, understand power in relationships, and develop protective strategies, including seeking help.

The Protective Behaviours Curriculum taught at Silver Tree Steiner School is: *The Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum* and is taught from Kindy to Year 6 to help students develop knowledge and skills to help manage their own safety. Parents are informed of the Protective Behaviours Program curriculum content to support them in continuing the dialogue at home.

While such programs can help children to develop useful skills, it is not reasonable or realistic to expect children to be able to guarantee their own safety in most cases. The safety of children remains at all times an adult responsibility. This responsibility should not be implicitly placed on children.

The following practices can however be usefully integrated into day to day practices:

- Encouraging the use of correct terminology for all body parts.
- Encouraging children to identify and discuss feelings in a variety of situations.
- Encouraging questioning and decision making skills.
- Respecting children's decision and choices about touch and encouraging them to respect other children's choices.
- Encouraging children to distinguish between situations where they feel safe and don't feel safe.
- Provide and environment where children know that their questions and concerns are listened to.

The Head of School in collaboration with the faculty is responsible for ensuring Protective Behaviours Programs are made part of the curriculum in collaboration with outside agencies.

Monitoring, Implementing, Publishing and Evaluating this Policy

- This Policy is to be reviewed and evaluated annually. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure this occurs.
- This policy is to be mandatory reading for all new and present employees at the school. Staff are to sign that they have read and understood it.
- This policy is to be supported through the annual training of all staff in Child Protection.
- This policy is to be discussed during at least one compulsory staff meeting per year. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure this occurs.
- A copy of this policy is to be made available in the office and the staff intranet.
- Parents of the school community will be informed of the content of the child protection policy and the procedures recommended by that policy in the event that abuse is suspected or has occurred, through materials sent home via email, letter or through the school newsletter. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure this occurs annually.
- A summary of the Child Protection Policy will be part of the Parent Handbook.

Where to Go for Further Information

The Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support (DCCPFS) is the state government department responsible for issues specifically related to the protection of children, including the handling of abuse and neglect cases. This website contains some excellent material for professionals, parents and friends. https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/child-protection

For sexual abuse reports, the Mandatory Reporting Service must be contacted on 1800 708 704 or an online report submitted: https://mandatoryreportingweb.communities.wa.gov.au/

This unit is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to make a report or to raise concerns. Details regarding mandatory reporting can be obtained through: https://www.wa.gov.au/service/community-services/community-support/mandatory-reporting-of-child-sexual-abuse-wa

To contact DCCPFS for assistance with a specific case that does not involve sexual abuse, the school will need to speak to the Duty Officer at the local office, available during office hours. All offices are listed on the website: https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/child-protection-office-locations

After hours resources

Crisis Care - 1800 199 008 (a 24 hour telephone service for people in crisis and needing urgent help)

WA Police - If the matter is urgent and the safety of a child is at risk, call **000**. If you are a victim of child abuse or paedophilia, or if you have information about someone else being abused, you should contact police on **131 444**, ring Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000,** or go to your local police station.

The websites below contain information on cyber predators for both parents, teachers and students to use:

- www.constablecare.org.au
- www.esafety.gov.au
- www.thinkuknow.org.au

The National Association of the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN)

NAPCAN is an Australian organisation that seeks to resource and network child welfare professionals and practitioners working to prevent child abuse and neglect from happening before it starts, through the provision of parenting brochures, training, support networks and information. www.napcan.org.au

The following services and organisations can provide help, advice and support to the school, parents or children who are affected by the effects of abuse and to prevent abuse from recurring:

Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support (see previous page for details)

Ngala Parenting Line 9368 9368/1800 111 546

Family Relationship Advice Line is a free confidential telephone counselling and information service for families with relationship difficulties. 1800 050 321

Men's Domestic Violence Helpline provides a free telephone, referral and counselling service for men who are concerned about becoming violent or abusive. 1800 000 599

Women's Domestic Violence Helpline provides a free 24 hour telephone support and counselling service for women experiencing family and domestic violence. 1800 007 339

Child and Adolescent Urgent Mental Health Support Lines 1800 048 636 – 24 hour mental health advice line.

Perth Children's Hospital 6456 2222

Child and Adolescent Health Service 1300 551 827

Disability Services Commission 1800 998 214

Kids Helpline is a free and confidential telephone counselling service for 5 to 25 year olds in Australia available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1800 551 800

Sexual Assault Resource Centre Counselling Line offers a free, 24 hour emergency service for people aged 13 or over who have been sexually assaulted or sexually abused recently (within the last two weeks). 1800 199 888

Lifeline Australia offers a service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can provide information about other support services, if required. 13 11 14

The following sites can provide a wide range of background information on child abuse for schools.

This site lists recent publications relating to information on child abuse that have been updated on the web site of the National Child Protection Clearing house: https://aifs.gov.au/research

This is the Australian Institute of Criminology site and has links to the criminal aspect of child abuse:

http://www.aic.gov.au/publications

References

AISWA Child Protection Policy Guidelines
Available: https://www.ais.wa.edu.au

Children and Community Services Act 2004
Available: www.slp.wa.gov.au

Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
Available: www.slp.wa.gov.au

Criminal Code Act (1913)
Available: www.slp.wa.gov.au

Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006 (changes to s204B of the Criminal Code
Available: www.slp.wa.gov.au

Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support
Available: https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/child-protection

Department of Education – Child Protection Policies
Available: http://det.wa.edu.au/policies

Working with Children (Screening) Act 2004
Available: www.slp.wa.gov.au

Reportable Conduct Scheme, An overview of the Reportable Conduct Scheme for providers of education services (schools)
Ombudsman Western Australia
Available: https://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Reportable_Conduct/RCS-Info.htm

Teachers Registration Boars of WA – Act Changes
Available: https://www.trb.wa.gov.au/About-Us/Act-Changes

Appendix A – National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Appendix B – Child Safe Statement of Commitment

SILVER TREE
STEINER SCHOOL

Child Safe Statement of Commitment

In accordance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Silver Tree Steiner School is committed to providing a child-safe environment which safeguards all students and is committed to promoting practices which provide for the safety, wellbeing and welfare of our children.

The Child Safe Statement of Commitment serves to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promote child safety in the Silver Tree Steiner School environment. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, school policies and is an adjunct to the School's Code of Conduct for Staff, Board of Governors, Contractors and Volunteers and Code of Conduct for Parents and forms part of the contract between the School, and any visitors, volunteers or contractors. (See Visitors and Volunteers Policy and Contractors Management Policy).

All adults {18 years and over} who are visiting Silver Tree Steiner School or who work with or supervise children at the School or on school related activities off campus, are expected to support and honour our Child Safe Statement of Commitment. This includes all visitors, employees, Board members, practicum students, parents, volunteers and contractors of Silver Tree Steiner School.

Silver Tree Steiner School explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment as defined in our Child Protection Policy.

You are expected to:

- Be a positive role model to students.
- Promote the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of students.
- Be vigilant and proactive regarding student safety and child protection issues.
- Provide age-appropriate supervision for students.
- Act in accordance with the School's child protection and safety policies at all times.
- Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children.
- Help create an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and is welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive for all children and their families.
- Use positive and affirming language towards students.
- Encourage students to 'have a say' and participate, and then listen to them with respect
- Respect cultural, religious, and political differences.
- Help provide an open, safe, and supportive environment for all students to interact, and socialise.
- Comply with Privacy laws and the School's policies and procedures on privacy, confidentiality, information sharing and record keeping.

You are expected to NOT:

- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour, or inappropriate language with students.
- Express personal views on cultures, race, or sexuality in the presence of students or discriminate against any student based on culture, race, ethnicity, or disability.
- Engage in open discussions of an adult nature in the presence of students.
- Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student including making sexually suggestive comments, sharing sexually suggestive material or grooming.
- Engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours including doing things of a personal nature that a student can do for themselves, e.g. toileting or changing clothes.
- Engage in any form of physical violence towards a student including inappropriately rough physical play.
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a student
- Engage in any form of behaviour that has the potential to cause a student serious emotional or psychological harm.
- Develop 'special' relationships with students that could be favouritism (e.g. the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students}.
- Engage in undisclosed private meetings with a student that is not your own child.
- Engage in meetings with a child that is not your own, outside of school hours and without permission from the School or the child's parent.
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a student.
- Take or publish (including online} photos, movies, or recordings of a student without parental/carer consent.
- Post online any information about a student that may identify them such as their full name; age; e-mail address; telephone number; residence; school; or details of a club they may attend.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- Consume alcohol or take illicit drugs under any circumstances in the school environment or at other school events where students are present.
- Share or provide illicit drugs or alcohol to students on or off campus.

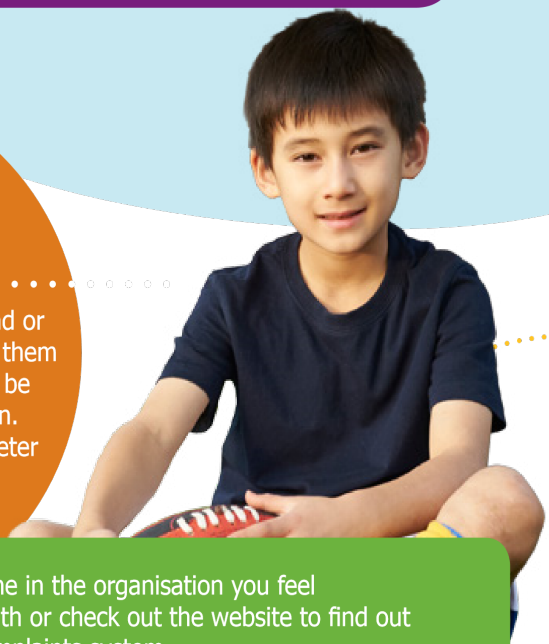
If you think this Child Safe Statement of Commitment has been broken by another person at Silver Tree Steiner School, you are expected to:

- Take actions promptly to ensure that children are safe.
- Promptly report concerns about child safety or breaches of this Agreement to the Head of School.
- Follow School's policies and procedures regarding complaints and concerns.

Breaches of the Child Safe Statement of Commitment may lead to you being asked to leave the School site, may include disciplinary action or the termination of engagement with Silver Tree Steiner School. If you have any concern that a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or you receive a disclosure, please contact the Head of School immediately.

Appendix C – Child Friendly Complaints Process

Top tips for making a complaint



1 Get support

Talk to a parent, carer, friend or someone you trust and ask them to help you. They can even be with you when you complain. You can also use an interpreter if you need to.

2 Find out how

Sometimes it is tricky to know how to make a complaint. It is usually best to talk to the organisation you are dealing with first.

a. Talk to someone in the organisation you feel comfortable with or check out the website to find out about their complaints system.

b. Find out who is the person responsible for complaints. This will save you from having to tell lots of people your full story.

c. What are the different ways you can make a complaint (face-to-face, by phone, in writing - letter, email, any others)?

If you are not safe or do not want to talk to someone in the organisation there are other agencies that can help you. Check out our website **ccyp.wa.gov.au**

3 Plan what you want to say

Write down what you are not happy about and how this has affected you. Also decide what you think should be done.

This will help you when you have to talk about it. You may need to tell a couple of people in the process, so it will also help you remember what you've said before.

Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia

4 Be calm and ask questions

When you make your complaint, try to be calm and polite even if you feel upset. Staff of the organisation should also treat you with respect.

Ask as many questions as you like. You may want to know:

- How they will keep your complaint private?
- What will happen next?
- Who will get back to you and your support person?
- When will they get back to you?
- If you're not happy about the result of your complaint what is the next step - who will review your complaint then?

5 Keep notes

Write down who you speak or write to, the dates, anything they promise they will do and the date they say they will get back to you. This will help you keep track of things. You can also write down how you feel about the complaint process, this may be useful later.

6 Keep at it

Don't be afraid to complain further if you are still not safe or feel the matter has not been resolved fairly.

From the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

Ground Floor, 1 Alvan Street, Subiaco WA 6008 | Telephone 08 6213 2297 | Facsimile 08 6213 2220
Freecall 1800 072 444 | www.ccyp.wa.gov.au