



## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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# ISWA's Statement of Purpose

Empowering student's unique development in an inclusive, inquiry-focused environment, to thrive in the world.

## Policy Purpose

This Policy provides an outline of the policies and procedures that we have developed to keep our students safe from abuse or other harm, and guides ISWA staff in matters related to the safety and care of children in attendance at our school:

- All school employees have a duty to provide a safe environment for children
- Anyone working with children must be screened, trained and qualified
- Any concerns must be reported immediately
- Education and empowerment are key factors in keeping students safe
- Compliance with all laws and regulations relevant to child protection and child safety in WA.

Each member of the ISWA community has a responsibility to understand the role they play in ensuring that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all that we do, and all decision making.

This Policy works in conjunction with other school policies including but not limited to Anti-Bullying, Behaviour, Code of Conduct, Complaints Handling, Diversity and Anti-Racism, and Duty of Care.

## Policy Principles

The guiding principles of this Policy are from:

- Duty of Care legislation – Common law
- Mandatory Reporting Legislation – *Children and Community Services Act 2004*
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- National Child Safe Organisation Principles

**Duty of Care** is a legislative requirement in WA which refers to the responsibility of staff to provide students with an adequate level of protection against harm and to take reasonable care to protect students from all reasonably foreseeable risk of injury. This includes teacher and student interactions whereby staff are required to safeguard the physical and emotional welfare of students. Staff behaviour with students should be always regulated by this duty of care both within and beyond the school setting.

**Mandatory reporting** legislation requires specific people or professionals to report concerns of child abuse to child protection agencies. Under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*, teachers are mandatory reporters in Western Australia.

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** proclaims that all State signatories should protect children "from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims." Child abuse and neglect are violations of children's human rights and can impede their intellectual, physical, social and emotional development.

The **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations** were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The National Principles are comprised of 10 Principles that were informed by, but go further than, the 10 Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission. They are:



## Roles and Responsibilities

All adults in the ISWA community have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of students. Specific responsibilities include:

### Child Protection Officers

Child Protection Officers are a point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

*Our Child Protection Officers are:*

Caroline Brokvam	Principal
Katherine Krom	Head of Secondary School
Paul O'Brien	Head of Primary School
Lisa Winnett	School Psychologist
Christine Rowlands	School Counsellor

## The Board of Directors

The ISWA Board is responsible for approving the Child Protection Policy and ensuring that the School has appropriate resources to effectively implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and our Child Protection Policy and procedures. The Board of Directors also undergo Mandatory Reporting training through AISWA. The Board Chair will also have responsibility for responding appropriately if allegations are made against the Principal.

## The Principal

The Principal is ultimately responsible for child protection, and as such is responsible for taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection Policy and related programs and procedures are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within ISWA. The Principal is also responsible for coordinating support for any child victim and for relevant staff where necessary.

## Heads of School

The Heads of Primary and Secondary will ensure that appropriate resources are made available in their area of operations. They support the Principal in the implementation of ISWA's child protection strategies, policies and procedures, and act as Child Protection Officers.

## Staff

All Staff are required to comply with our Child Protection Policy, Codes of Conduct, undergo Mandatory Reporting and other training as asked, and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is everyone's responsibility to be aware of key indicators of abuse, to be observant, and to understand how to report child protection incidents and concerns.

All teachers undergo training in the *Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum*, which is implemented by classroom teachers (primary school), in homeroom, health and wellbeing classes (secondary school), ensuring students from Kindergarten to Year 12 receive approved child protection curriculum each year.

All staff must undergo Working with Children Checks. All teachers undergo criminal background checks when registering with the Teacher Board of Western Australia.

## Volunteers

All Volunteers who have direct contact with students at ISWA are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students at school and must comply with our Code of Conduct. It is Volunteers' responsibility to be aware of key indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise all child safety concerns with one of ISWA's Child Safety Officers. Volunteers who are not parents at the school must undergo a Working with Children Check. Volunteers who are parents are exempt from a WWC, unless on an overnight camp.

## Contractors

All Contractors engaged by ISWA are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students at school, and to comply with our Code of Conduct. Direct Contact and Regular Contractors are required to understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse, grooming and other harm. ISWA may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Contractor. These may include, for example, sports coaches, cleaners, peripatetic music teachers and other co-curricular instructors who have an agreement with ISWA to use the school facilities.

## Protective Education

ISWA teachers are all trained in *Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum*.

In Primary School, children will be taught that healthy relationships are safe and respectful and that we are all responsible for recognising and promoting safe and respectful relationships.

In the Secondary Schools students will be educated about issues related to their personal health and assisted to develop the skills necessary to make good decisions about their health, safety and relationships. As students become increasingly empowered, they will understand:

- Personal choices related to health and wellbeing will enhance their safety
- Their right to social, emotional and physical wellbeing, and to make their decisions about their bodies
- The influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on wellbeing and safety
- Advocating for personal, family and community health promotes healthy behaviour and choices

## Child Protection Human Resources Management

ISWA applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of Staff, Volunteers and Contractors. Our recruitment procedures ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children and young people. All Staff, direct contact Volunteers and Contractors are required to maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

The School will conduct a comprehensive verification of previous employment of all staff. This includes references being checked by phone, a virtual meeting or through a professional email address. One reference will be from the applicant's current supervisor.

Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors are subject to regular supervision and performance monitoring while engaging with students.

ISWA ensures that professional development programs for Staff include child protection education and training programs.

## Child Protection Risk Management

ISWA recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and we use this information to inform our policies, procedures, and activity planning.

ISWA has developed Risk Management Procedures to assist in the identification, assessment, and management of child safety risks in all school environments.

## Non-Compliance

In the event of non-compliance with our Child Protection Policy and our Child Safe Codes of Conduct, we will instigate a review that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- suspension; and/or in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

## Key Definitions and Indicators

Please note that behavioural indicators across these subtypes of child abuse in and of themselves do not constitute abuse or neglect. However, together with other indicators and concerns they may cause a mandatory reporter to form a belief and warrant a discussion with a Child Protection Officer if there is doubt.

### Abuse

According to the World Health Organisation, "Child maltreatment, sometimes referred to as child abuse and neglect, includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development or dignity." Within this broad definition, four subtypes can be identified: neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.

### Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic physical, medical and or psychological needs.

#### Examples:

Physical: Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or lack of appropriate supervision- this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship such as leaving children unsupervised at home for an extended period.

Medical: Failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment.

Emotional: inattention to a child's emotional needs and failure to provide psychological care.

#### Possible Indicators:

- Child is unwashed or poorly dressed
- Child is hungry
- Stealing or scavenging compulsively
- Frequent tardiness or absence
- Acute fatigue
- Parents do not respond to communications from school
- Child does not want to go home
- Parents are disinterested in child's academic performance or wellbeing

### Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is causing internal or external physical injury, not by accidental means.

#### Examples:

Hitting, kicking, shaking, suffocating, burning, biting.

#### Possible Indicators:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts or fractures on any part of the body.
- Injuries that regularly appear after weekends or absences.
- Unexplained burns or burns with a pattern.
- Injuries inconsistent with the information given by the child.
- Fear of going home, or anxiety about being in certain places.
- May flinch if touched unexpectedly.
- Extremely aggressive or withdrawn.
- Poor sleeping patterns, frequent nightmares

- Poor attendance.
- Poor memory and concentration

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior where a child is subjected to continuous and hurtful verbal abuse, which disregards a child's emotional well-being.

### Examples:

Excessive criticism, constant disapproval, belittling, excessive teasing, severe humiliation, negative comparisons, insults, put downs, harmful threats, inappropriate expectations, verbal assault.

### Possible Indicators:

- Fear of failing
- Fear of consequences, can lead to lying
- Mood swings, withdrawal or aggressiveness
- Mental or emotional developmental lags
- Social isolation
- Low self-esteem, depression
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints (e.g., headache, nausea, abdominal pain)
- Bedwetting and or diarrhea
- Reports of humiliation, or intimidation and bizarre punishments.

## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any act where an adult or a more powerful person includes a child in a sexual activity. Typically, this occurs to satisfy the needs of the person in power. It can be consensual or not, and many cases of sexual abuse are done by a family member or someone the child knows and trusts, therefore children can be groomed, blamed, or manipulated to keep secrets.

### Examples:

Penetrative or non-penetrative sexual acts, sexual intercourse, anal or oral sex, touching of genitals or breasts, the showing of private parts by an adult, forcing a child to watch sexual acts or pornographic material, developmentally inappropriate conversations about sexual content, the exploitation of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices.

### Possible Indicators:

- Sexual knowledge, behavior or language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Sexually transmitted infection in a child of any age
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital or anal areas.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Extremely protective parenting
- Having secrets that they cannot tell anyone about
- Reluctance to change into PE clothes, fear of bathrooms
- Behavioural/emotional disturbances

## Responding to Disclosure of Abuse or Neglect

If a student makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect, staff should not attempt to elicit a full disclosure or ask direct questions. Children will rarely use adult language or specific terms when disclosing abuse, the language used will be at the developmental level of the child, and the disclosure may be partial or accidental. The child should be encouraged to speak freely but staff should not try to direct the child down a particular path of thought.

A disclosure can arouse strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness. It is important to try and control these feelings and work through them after the disclosure. A hint of disbelief, judgement or strong emotion could cause a child to stop disclosing.

The wellbeing and privacy of the child is paramount. Use 'protective interrupting' if students begin to disclose in class or in a public area to protect them from sharing the information with others. Acknowledge that you have heard them and arrange to see them away from other students. Make sure that they understand the limits to your confidentiality. 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.

## Reporting Child Abuse

All strong concerns for the welfare of children will be acted on by the school. If a child is believed to be maltreated by parents/caregivers, this will be discussed with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support or the Police Child Abuse Squad before or instead of advising parents/caregivers. These agencies will then decide on the provision of advice to parents/caregivers and any further action. The school must not inform parents until they have sought advice from CPFS or WA Police, so as not to hinder a possible investigation.

Students aged 18 are legally considered adults and as such CPFS does not have a child protection mandate for them. Staff do, however, have an ongoing duty of care for all enrolled students at ISWA. We will contact the Police when aware of any assault or crime against a young adult. We may also consult the Youth Legal Service.

## Reporting Sexual Abuse

In cases of suspected sexual abuse, teachers are mandated reporters and thus required to make a report to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support through the Mandatory Reporting Service (MRS).

If the teacher concerned wishes, they may include the Principal and other relevant staff in discussions prior to forming a belief based on reasonable grounds. If either of those parties are mandated reporters and then personally form a belief, they are then also legally obliged to make a report to the MRS.

The teacher must document the details of the grounds for their belief as well as any observations, consultations and actions taken.

Non-teaching staff are not mandatory reporters but will still undergo the training. Non-teaching staff may report their belief to the Principal or another of the school's Child Protection Officers.

In urgent cases, the Mandatory Reporter should make a verbal report to the MRS and then follow up by submitting a written report within 24 hours to the MRS.

The MRS receipt number must be recorded, and a school Critical Incident Report completed which includes this number. The Critical Incident Report should not include any other details of the report; its purpose is only to record that a mandatory report was made.



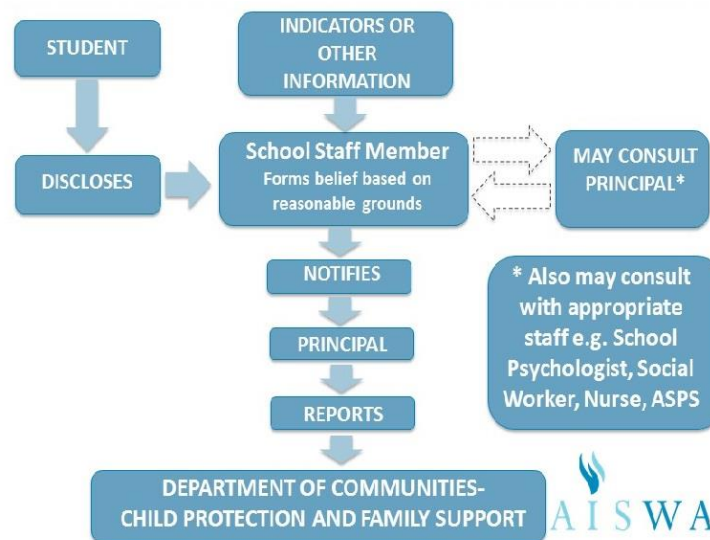
Mandatory Reporting Forms may be found on the MRS website:

[www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au](http://www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au)

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS), through the Mandatory Reporting Service (in cases of mandatory reports of child sexual abuse) and its district offices, has the statutory responsibility for assessing complaints of suspected child abuse and neglect and providing support and protective services when appropriate.

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.

#### Notification Procedure – Sexual Abuse (Mandatory)



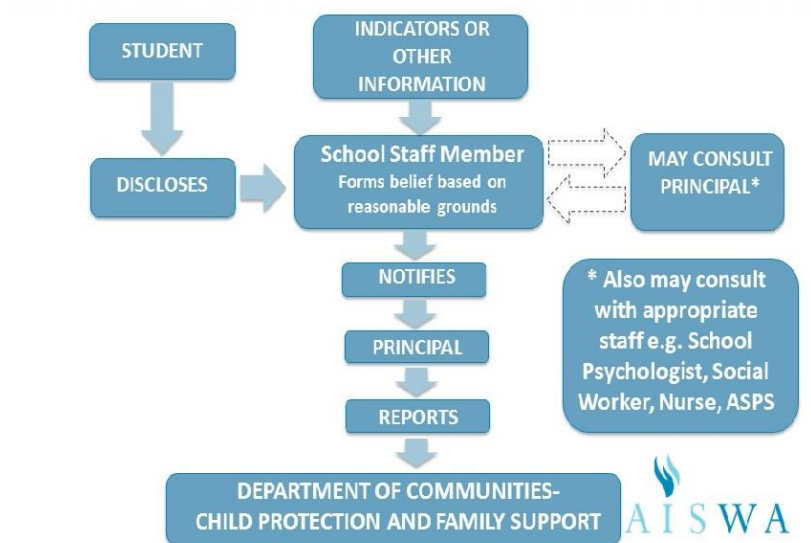
#### Reporting physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect

These types of abuse are not subject to mandatory reporting. The teacher or staff member's observations or the child's disclosure should be discussed with one of the school's Child Protection Officers. The Department for Child Protection and Family Support or the Police Child Abuse Squad may be informed.

Contact with the Child Abuse Squad may be made during office hours by telephoning (08) 9428 1666.

*Note: It is vital to remember that confidentiality is paramount and that disclosure of this information should only be discussed with those in the school who are required to know.*

#### Notification Procedure – Child Abuse & Neglect (Non-Mandatory)



## Support for Victims of abuse and neglect

Victims of abuse and neglect will be supported by the school through an appropriate management plan formed in consultation with the Department for Child Protection.

## Documentation and Storing Reports

All staff shall ensure that they document all information, consultations and actions taken involving concerns of child abuse. All records must provide factual information, observable indicators and non-opinion or conclusions. Records must include the dates and approximate times of observations or disclosures with exact wording of statements made by the child. This includes historic allegations of child abuse.

Documentation will be stored securely by the Principal, separate from the child's school file in accordance with The Management of Confidential Information in Schools. The Principals will keep written records of all communication with CPFS, WA Police, the Child Abuse Squad or any other agency involved in the case as well as all observations, actions and strategies implemented by the school. If the school documents contain information relating to child sexual abuse, the identity of the reporter will not be recorded.

Mandatory Reporters may opt to keep a copy of mandatory reports they have made themselves. Storage of such reports should be as secure as possible.

Mandatory reports or their copies may not be stored on school property, as this is in contravention of the section of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 that deals with confidentiality of identity of reporters.

The receipt number for a mandatory report must be recorded by the reporter as proof that a report has been made.

## Legal Protection

Teachers who report suspected child abuse or neglect through the proper channels and with the best interests of the child in mind are protected in the event of legal action being taken against them and are entitled to invoke the legal defence of qualified privilege. Qualified privilege is interpreted as: if a person

makes a statement that is possibly defamatory to another person with a 'like interest' but the first person has a legitimate interest, either legal or moral, in the situation, qualified privilege protects the first person.

The defence of qualified privilege does not cover general discussion in the staffroom, conversation with other parents or members of the general community. It should be noted that the defence of qualified privilege will not be available where complaints are made upon spurious grounds, in bad faith or without reasonable grounds to make the complaint. Teachers must follow the procedures and maintain absolute confidentiality. The Children and Community Services Act 2004 part 4 division 10 s.129 provides statutory protection to persons who, on reasonable grounds and in good faith, make a report for the purposes of facilitating the enforcement of provisions of that Act with respect to the circumstances of a child.

## Policy and Program Review

ISWA Child Protection Policies and procedures will be reviewed annually for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection and child safety related laws, regulations and standards. We are committed both to self-reflection and to seeking, actioning, and incorporating feedback into this Policy, from students, families, and the wider community.

<b>Policy Category</b>	Governance
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<b>Frequency of review</b>	2 Years
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Principal or Board
<b>Amendment History</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Amendment</b>
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November 2022	Review and Update