700 Student Engagement & Wellbeing

704 Child Abuse

Last updated: 08/10/2026
Last updated by School Council:
Line Manager: AP Student Operations

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the Wodonga Senior Secondary College Office 02 6043 7500.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- describe how staff at Wodonga Senior Secondary College identify and respond to child safety concerns and child abuse following the 4 Critical Actions
- ensure our staff and school community raise concerns about child abuse.

SCOPE

This policy applies to any concern of child abuse or reportable conduct:

- by any adult engaged by the school or school council or any other adult while connected to the school environment (including e.g. staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers and visitors)
- between students
- towards students by members of their family
- towards students by members of the community.

Child abuse and reportable conduct can occur in any physical or online environment and include grooming.

DEFINITIONS

There are many types of child abuse. For more information, see Types of child abuse and what to look for and Child Safety Definitions.

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming
- physical violence against a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm against a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. It is also a form of Reportable Conduct. The offence of grooming is when an adult engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person under the age of 16 for future sexual activity. This can be with the groomer or with another adult. Grooming can occur face-to-face, online or a combination of both.

Grooming behaviour can involve the use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques. These can be used to build trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour.

Reportable Conduct includes:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child

by any adult working or volunteering at our school including any employees, volunteers or contractors.

For further information see: Reportable and Notifiable Conduct Policy.

POLICY

Everyone at Wodonga Senior Secondary College has an important role to:

- prevent child abuse (including grooming) in our school or during school activities
- identify and respond to concerns of child abuse using the 4 Critical Actions – based on the source of abuse:
    - by an adult engaged by the school
    - between students
    - in the family
    - in the community.

Wodonga Senior Secondary College follows the Department of Education policies on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- Child abuse (including grooming) – identification and response
- Student to Student Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour

- Reportable and Notifiable Conduct policy.

Wodonga Senior Secondary College has other policies that are part of our child safety framework and describe actions we take to ensure students are safe and feel safe to raise a complaint. These include:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy.

These policies are available on our school website at https://www.wssc.vic.edu.au.

PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE, OR ALLEGATION OF CHILD ABUSE

All staff at our school must use the 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse. The 4 Critical Actions are:

- Identify child abuse
- Support students in the school
- Refer student to community services
- Report abuse to authorities.

At all times all staff must:

- Respond to an emergency
- Adapt to changing circumstances
- Document their actions.

All staff must follow the 4 Critical Actions - based on the source of abuse:

- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse by an adult engaged by the school
    - Any allegation, complaint, disclosure or concern of abuse (including grooming) by an adult engaged by a school may be reportable conduct under Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme and **must be reported**.
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to student-to-student abuse
    - As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by another student **you must act**.
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse in the family
    - As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by someone in the family **you must act**.
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse in the community.
    - As soon as you form a reasonable belief that a student has been, or is at risk of being, abused by someone in the community **you must act.**

Our school follows detailed guidance on the 4 Critical Actions for each source of abuse on the PROTECT website. This includes guidance on how to respond to a disclosure of child abuse made by a student or young person in a trauma-informed way and provide appropriate support, including suggested language to use.

To ensure the 4 Critical Actions are followed, staff must immediately notify one of our school's relevant child safety nominated contacts on becoming aware that a student is, or may be, experiencing child abuse (including grooming).

Our child safety nominated contacts are listed in the table below. Our school's child safety nominated contacts work with staff and school leadership to provide oversight and ensure:

- child safety concerns are taken seriously
- the school's response is prompt and thorough
- the relevant 4 Critical Actions and PROTECT guidance are followed.

Anyone can contact these staff about a child safety concern. This includes students, parents/carers, volunteers, or anyone else in the school community who has concerns about child abuse including grooming.

Role	Name	Phone
Principal	David Whitehead – seniorcollege@wssc.vic.edu.au	02 6043 7500
Campus Principal	Steve Fouracre seniorcollege@wssc.vic.edu.au	02 6043 7500
Student Wellbeing and Child Safe Officer	Lana Melbourne seniorcollege@wssc.vic.edu.au	02 6043 7500

Escalating concerns

Following the 4 Critical Actions ensures that our staff take all the necessary steps where there is a concern about abuse, including grooming. If any staff member is concerned that

these processes have not been followed they must:

- raise their concerns with the principal and escalate to the regional office via 1800 338 663 or email enquiries@education.vic.gov.au if they remain unsatisfied
- report concerns to the appropriate authorities (e.g. Victoria Police or Child Protection) in line with the 4 Critical Actions.

Reporting concerns about child safety contacts or school leadership

To report any allegations or concerns of abuse including grooming about a listed child safety contact, notify the principal.

To report any allegations or concerns of abuse including grooming by a principal, please contact:

- Department of Education
  - Anyone can contact the Department of Education.
  - Email: enquiries@education.vic.gov.au
  - Phone: 1800 338 663
  - For more information see: Report abuse if you're a current student.
- Department of Education Speak Up service
  - Staff can use the Speak Up service to report improper conduct, fraud or corruption (including to make an anonymous report) or other improper conduct.
  - Website: https://www.pkftalkintegrity.com/?det
  - Email: educationspeakup@pkf.com.au
  - Phone 1800 633 462.

Meeting our legal obligations

Our staff must take reasonable steps to minimise risks of harm to students in their care that is reasonably foreseeable. For further information see: PROTECT child safety frameworks and legal obligations.

Further information on relevant child safety frameworks and legal obligations is in **Appendix 1**.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community. It may be:

- published on our school's website
- included in staff induction processes and annual staff training

- communicated to the school community through school newsletters or our electronic student management system
- included in volunteer induction processes and training for relevant volunteers
- discussed in annual staff briefings or meetings
- included in staff handbook or manual
- made available in hard copy available from school administration upon request.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following Department of Education policies and guidance are relevant to this policy:

- PROTECT
- Child Safe Standards
- Reportable and Notifiable Conduct Policy
- Child abuse (including grooming) – identification and response
- Student-to-student abuse and harmful sexual behaviour
- Managing and Reporting School Incidents
- Duty of Care
- Restraint and Seclusion

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	20/10/2026
Consultation	Community Consultation
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	20/10/2028