



Korowa Child Safe Reporting Procedures

Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and School Council Members

Korowa Anglican Girls' School is a Child Safe School.

Korowa is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. We have a zero tolerance stance on child abuse and are committed to the protection of all children from all forms of abuse.

Child abuse situations can be very complex, not only from the perspective of ascertaining whether abuse has occurred but also in understanding what steps to take to protect a child.

It is important to remember at all times that the safety and welfare of the child are paramount.

Whenever there are concerns that a child *is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.*

If you have a concern that a child may be experiencing abuse, whether or not you have formed a belief on reasonable grounds that the abuse has occurred, you should immediately raise your concerns with one of the Korowa Child Protection officers. They have received additional training and assist Korowa in co-ordinating responses to child protection incidents. The Korowa Child Protection Officers are:

- The Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing
- The Head of Junior School
- The School Chaplain
- The Director of the ELC
- The School Counsellor

What steps must I take if I have concerns about a child's safety?

Step 1

- If you believe the child is in immediate danger call the police on 000. If this is the case the Principal should also be notified immediately

Step 2

- Clearly document your concerns and any observations you have made using the template located on the School's website
- Be specific about the words used (if the matter has been brought to your attention by the child or any other person)



- If the child has spoken to you directly do not promise them that you will keep the matter confidential

Step 3

- Contact a Korowa Child Protection Officer to discuss your concerns

What will Korowa do in response to your report?

- Ensure accurate records of discussions are kept
- Ensure the matter is handled sensitively and in a confidential manner
- Ensure any required mandatory or legislative reports required by the School are made
- Take all reasonable steps to remove the risk of further harm to the child
- Conduct a review of the Child Safe Risks in the Korowa Risk Register and corresponding controls to address any further risks identified
- Korowa's Child Protection Officers will support you in understanding and other legal obligations you may have

The overriding consideration in any child safety matter is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. Please note that reporting the matter internally does not release you from other legal and regulatory reporting obligations you may have, namely:

- The Obligation to Report a Sexual Offence
- The Failure to Protect
- The Obligation to Make a Mandatory Report (Mandatory Reporting)
- The Obligation to Notify Reportable Conduct.

Reporting a Sexual Offence

Under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (s 327), anyone aged 18 years or over must make a report to the Police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under the age of 16 years, by a person aged 18 years or over. Failure to make a report without reasonable excuse is an offence and carries a prison term.

If a report is made to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in accordance with Mandatory Reporting Obligations an additional report to the Police will not usually be required unless further information is obtained.

This obligation applies to anyone aged 18 years or over, including all non-teaching staff, volunteers and students aged 18 and over. The legislation also applies to teaching staff if not already covered by the mandatory reporting obligation.



Acting to Protect

Where a person in a position of authority at Korowa (Staff, volunteers who have direct supervision of children, the School Council, the Principal) become aware that a staff member, volunteer, third party contractor, or other person associated with Korowa poses a substantial risk of committing a sexual offence against a student or students, that person has a positive duty to take immediate action to ensure that the student or students are protected from that risk.

Korowa has a duty of care to protect all students from foreseeable risks while at school or engaging in School activities.

What do I do?

Where any staff member, volunteer, or other person in a position of authority at the time, becomes aware of a risk of a sexual offence against a student or students under their care, they should immediately:

- take reasonable steps which would remove or reduce the risk to the student or students, which may include immediately removing the person from contact with the student or students
- report the matter to a Korowa Child Protection Officer and the Principal as soon as practicable

Making a Mandatory Report

The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (CYFA) requires that mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection when they believe that a child (aged under 17) is in need of protection from significant harm from physical injury or sexual abuse.

What Constitutes a Belief?

Forming a belief is a thinking process where a person is more inclined to accept rather than reject that there is significant harm for the child or young person.

There may be reasonable grounds for forming a belief if:

- a child or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child (often talking about themselves) states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused
- someone who knows the child states that there has been abuse
- there are physical or behavioural indicators of physical or sexual abuse



Important Points

- A professional does not have to prove that abuse has taken place—they only need to have reasonable grounds for their belief
- Permission is not needed from parents to make a notification nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being made
- If a professional makes a notification in good faith they cannot be held legally liable regardless of the outcome of the notification
- Notification shall not be held to constitute a breach of professional etiquette or ethics
- The name of the notifier is not disclosed unless the notifier gives written permission
- The Principal has ultimate duty of care

Procedure at Korowa Anglican Girls' School

1. Individual teachers or the School Nurse should make observations and document any concerns noting the exact words, incidents, events or observations that led them to form a suspicion that a child may be in need of protection. A report may be necessary
2. If a staff member has a suspicion that a person associated with Korowa (staff, parents, volunteers, third party contractors etc.) poses a risk of committing a sexual offence against a child these concerns should be discussed with a Child Protection Officer or with the School Counsellor or School Psychologist
3. The School Counsellor or School Psychologist must be informed and will then further explore the concerns. The School Counsellor or School Psychologist will consult with the Principal if there are grounds for notification
4. The notification to Child Protection Services will be made by either the Principal or School Counsellor or School Psychologist in conjunction with the teacher or School Nurse, in a timely and sensitive manner
5. Details of concerns and the decision made to report or not, will be documented and kept in the Student's Counselling file
6. If a teacher or the School Nurse has expressed concern about a child and the Head of Junior School, Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing, School Psychologist and/or the School Counsellor believe the matter is not reportable and the teacher or School Nurse disagrees, they can approach the Principal directly. If, in their opinion, their concern is still not addressed and they have a belief that the child is at risk of significant harm, they must ask Child Protection Services for guidance or report the case themselves, but must inform the Principal prior to this
7. The Principal will decide who in the School needs to be informed, bearing in mind that confidentiality in the interests of both the child and family is vital
8. If, following a report, a family approaches the school, any interview conducted must be undertaken by the Principal (or her delegate) and one other member of staff to provide support in what could be a difficult situation. The focus of such a meeting should be the welfare of the child, not on justifying the actions of the staff involved. The anonymity of the staff member who raised the concerns will be protected

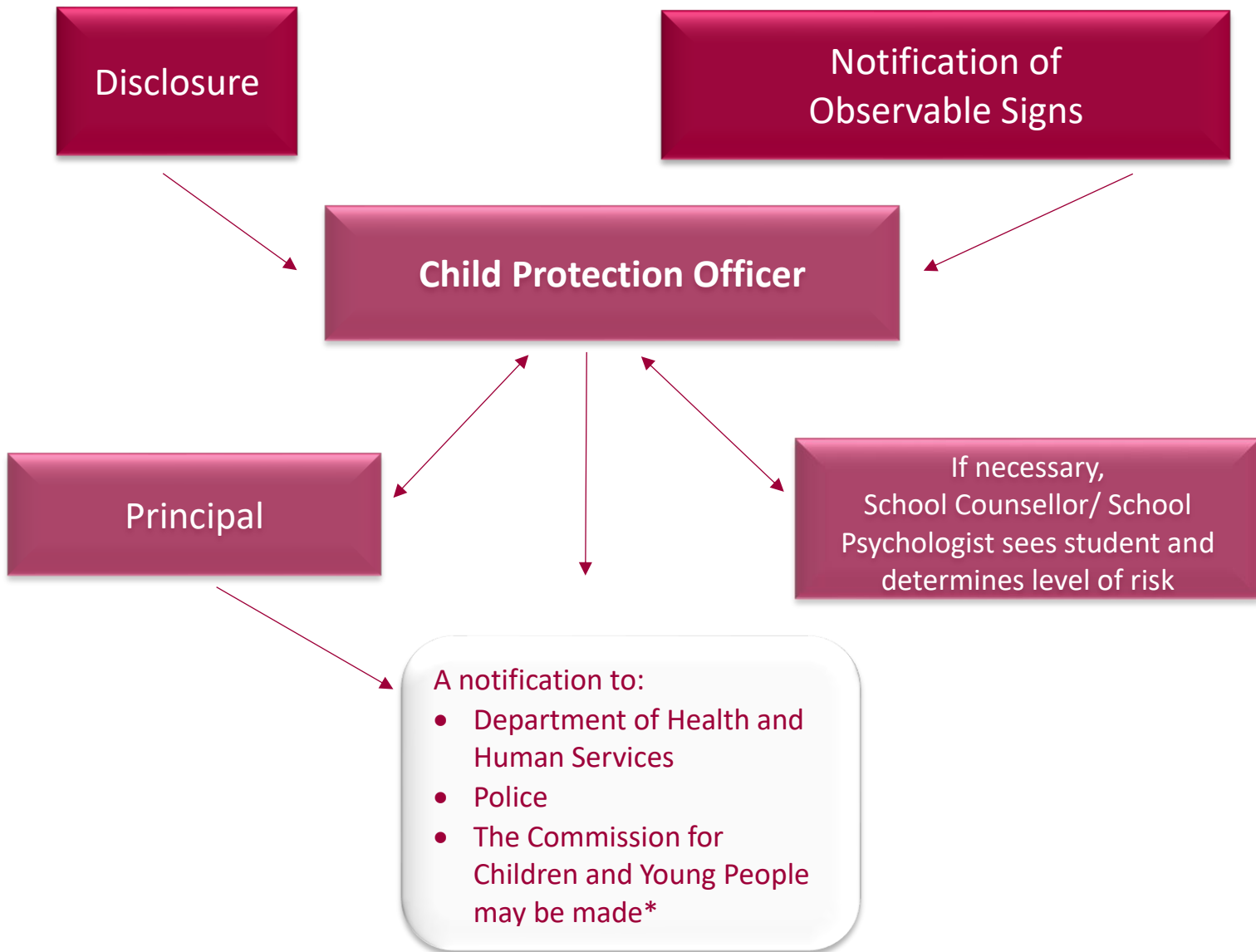


9. Facilities will be made available for a worker from the Department of Human Services Child Protection to interview a student at School where necessary. The Principal must be notified beforehand and a member of staff, preferably the School Counsellor or School Psychologist, will be present at such an interview
10. Support for the reporting teacher or School Nurse will be available through the Principal, Head of Junior School, Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing, School Counsellor, School Psychologist and/or School Chaplain. This support will continue to be provided throughout the period that the Department of Human Services Child Protection is involved. The staff member can also seek support via the School's Employee Assistance Program

Communicating with Child Protection Services or Police

Should anyone from Child Protection Services or Police contact Korowa seeking information about a student, the call should be put through to the Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing who will verify the authenticity of the call and enlist the support of staff as needed. The Principal, Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing and Head of Junior School should be notified following such a call.

Staff Response in the Korowa Context



* In the Mandatory Reporting context, if a teacher, the School Nurse, the School Counsellor, the School Psychologist or the School Chaplain (all designated mandatory reporters) have expressed concern about a child and the Head of Junior School, Deputy Principal the School Counsellor and/or the School Psychologist believe the matter is not reportable and the mandated reporter disagrees, they can approach the Principal directly. If, in their opinion, their concern is still not addressed and they have a belief that the child is at risk of significant harm, they must ask Child Protection Services for guidance or report the case themselves, but must inform the Principal prior to this.



Other Members of the Community (Indirect Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Parents)

Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Indirect Contact Volunteers, students, parents/guardians or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse should contact one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

Korowa's Child Safe Policy sets out the procedure for other members of the community to make a report.

To support this process, Staff must refer members of the community to Student Services or Junior School Reception immediately if they have a concern that a child may be experiencing any form of abuse.

Student Services or Junior School Reception will undertake the following steps to support the reporter to fulfil their reporting obligations:

1. Ask whether they believe the child is in immediate danger and if so that they should contact the Police on 000. If this is the case the Principal should also be notified immediately
2. If there is no immediate danger, advise them that Korowa has appointed Child Protection Officers who receive special training that allows them to deal with child protection concerns both sensitively and effectively
3. Advise them who the Korowa Child Protection officers are:
 - Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing
 - Head of Junior School
 - School Counsellor
 - School Chaplain
 - Director of the ELC
4. Contact one of the Child Protection Officers immediately (either the one requested by the reporting party or an alternate if that person is not available) and arrange a time to meet as soon as practicable
5. Advise parties that the Korowa Child Protection Officers are also available to answer any questions that they may have with respect to our Child Safe Policy and our Child Protection Program

What will Korowa do in response to your report?

1. Ensure accurate records of discussions are kept
2. Ensure the matter is handled sensitively and in a confidential manner
3. Ensure any required mandatory or legislative reports required by the School are made
4. Take all reasonable steps to remove the risk of further harm to the child
5. Conduct a review of the Child Safe Risks in the Korowa Risk Register and corresponding controls to address any further risks identified
6. Korowa's Child Protection Officers will support you in understanding any other legal obligations you may have

Students

If any student is feeling unsafe or has concerns for their safety or that of any other student, they should:

1. Discuss the matter with any Korowa staff that they feel comfortable with
2. The staff member will advise the student that they need to document the conversation and confirm whether the student will feel comfortable with the School Counsellor or School Psychologist or another Child Protection Officer assisting in recording their concerns
3. The Korowa staff member (together with the Child Protection Officers where the child has consented) will discuss the matter with the student and take appropriate notes, observations and records
4. If the Child Protection Officer was not involved in the initial conversation with the student, the staff member will then report directly to one of the Child Protection Officers

What will Korowa do in response to a student report?

1. Ensure accurate records of discussions are kept
2. Ensure the matter is handled sensitively and in a confidential manner
3. Ensure any required mandatory or legislative reports required by the School are made
4. Take all reasonable steps to remove the risk of further harm to the child
5. Conduct a review of the Child Safe Risks in the Korowa Risk Register and corresponding controls to address any further risks identified

Further age appropriate information on Student reporting procedures is contained in School Diary.

Vexatious Claims

Whilst there may be instances where a claim by a Student or past Student may be considered vexatious in nature and not founded on fact, Korowa has a zero tolerance for failing to report all allegations of suspected abuse.

All claims of alleged abuse must be reported and will be thoroughly investigated via the Reporting Procedures contained in the Korowa Child Protection Program Handbook. If the claim is found to be vexatious appropriate counselling and support will be provided to the Student and their family.



Retrospective Claims

Korowa is committed to responding to all allegations of Child Abuse, including allegations of misconduct that may have occurred in the past. Any person who raises a concern with Korowa around abuse allegations must be directed to the Principal.

What will Korowa do in response to a retrospective allegation?

1. Ensure accurate records of discussions are kept
2. Where the person alleging the abuse is still of School going age in Victoria and currently attending a Victorian School Korowa will follow the procedures set out above and detailed in our Child Protection Program
3. Where the allegations relate to a current member of Korowa staff we will take all necessary steps to ensure we act to protect current students at the School
4. Ensure the matter is handled sensitively and in a confidential manner
5. Ensure any required mandatory or legislative reports required by the School are made
6. Take any further action required of them to ensure appropriate redress of the matter if required