PROTECTION OF CHILDREN PROCEDURE

Child Safety Responding and Reporting

These procedures must be followed to support the implementation of the *Protection of Children Policy*.

1.0 PURPOSE

This *Protection of Children Procedure* (Procedure) informs St Brendan's Catholic Primary School, Lakes Entrance (the School) staff of their responsibilities in relation to the disclosure/reporting responsibilities and removing the risk to children and young people of suspected abuse where practicable.

This Procedure informs the School and staff of their responsibilities in relation to the implementation of procedures related to the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and the *Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014* (Vic.) including:

- *Failure to disclose offence*, which requires adults to report to Victoria Police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child by another adult.
- *Failure to protect offence*, which applies to people in positions of authority within organisations, who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and failed to reduce or remove the risk.
- *Grooming offence*, which targets communication with a child and/or their parents/ guardians/carers with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

The purpose of this Procedure is to:

- describe how staff at the School identify and respond to child safety concerns and child abuse
- ensure our staff and school community report concerns about child abuse to relevant staff and authorities.

2.0 SCOPE

This Procedure applies to the School as a school governed by Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL) and supports the enactment of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and the *Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014* (Vic.)

Fulfilling the role and responsibilities in the procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

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

- by any adult engaged by the school or school council (including e.g. staff, volunteers, contractors and service providers)
- between students
- in the family
- in the community.

This Procedure is informed by *Protection of Children Policy*.

3.0 CONTEXT

Our aim at St. Brendan's Catholic Primary School is that all staff are empowered with the knowledge, confidence and responsibility to identify and respond promptly to any concerns regarding child safety.

Through ongoing training, clear procedures and a shared commitment to vigilance, staff recognise the signs of abuse or neglect and take appropriate, timely action in accordance with legislative, diocesan and departmental requirements.

We foster an environment of accountability and professional integrity, where concerns are reported respectfully and without hesitation. Staff are supported to follow established processes for responding to and reporting child safety concerns (Four Critical Actions for Schools), ensuring consistency, transparency and the prioritisation of student well being at all times.

By working in partnership with families, external agencies and the wider community, we actively uphold the rights, dignity and safety of all children. Through this commitment, we aim to build a safe and supportive learning environment where students can thrive, knowing they are protected and cared for.

4.0 PROCEDURES

4.1 Responding to an incident, disclosure, or allegation of child abuse.

4.1.1 If a staff member becomes aware that a student is, or may be, experiencing, or is at risk of, child abuse (including grooming) **they MUST act** by reporting to the child safety contacts listed in Appendix 1.

4.1.2 All concerns must be reported even if the person raising the concern does not know if it is true.

4.1.3 Where the concern is about the child safety contact, the staff member must notify the Principal.

4.1.4 Where the concern is about the Principal, the staff member must notify DOSCEL Child Protection on (03) 5622 6600 (DOSCEL office) or email PROTECT@doscel.catholic.edu.au

4.1.5 The school must respond to the report by following the relevant 4 critical actions depending on the source of the abuse:

- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse by an adult engaged by the school
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to student-to-student abuse
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse in the family
- 4 Critical Actions to identify and respond to child abuse in the community.

N.B. Detailed guidance on the 4 Critical Actions is set out 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.

4.2 Child safety contacts

4.2.1 The school has identified child safety contacts. These staff are responsible for managing child safety incidents. They are listed in *Appendix 1*.

4.2.2 Anyone can contact these staff to discuss a child safety concern. This includes parents/carers, staff, volunteers, students or anyone else who has concerns about abuse (including grooming).

4.2.3 These staff will:

- ensure that child safety concerns are taken seriously
- promptly and thoroughly manage the school's response
- arrange support for any student who is impacted by abuse
- communicate with any student who raises, or is affected by, a complaint or concern
- monitor overall compliance of the school with PROTECT and the relevant 4 Critical Actions.

4.3 Meeting our legal obligations

4.3.1 All school staff must take reasonable steps to minimise risks of harm to students in their care that is reasonably foreseeable. https://www.vic.gov.au/legal-obligations-child-safety-frameworks

4.3.2 Following the 4 Critical Actions ensures that our school takes all the necessary steps where there is a concern about abuse (or 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 DOSCEL Child Protection on (03) 5622 6600 (DOSCEL office) or email PROTECT@doscel.catholic.edu.au
- report concerns to the appropriate authorities (e.g. Victoria Police or Child Protection) in line with their legal obligations and child safety frameworks.

4.3.3 Further information on relevant legal obligations is provided in Appendix 2.

5.0 ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY
Principal	Ensure all staff and the Principal understand the responsibilities within child safety responding and reporting procedures.	Ensure all staff have annual training and professional development with child safety (responding and reporting).
Deputy Principal	Ensure all staff, the Principal and Deputy Principal understand the responsibilities within child safety responding and reporting procedures.	Assist the Principal in ensuring all staff meet the requirements of professional development with child safety (responding and reporting).
All Staff	To understand their legal obligations (Duty of Care), respond and report using the 4 critical actions (PROTECT) to minimise the risks of harm to students.	Maintain annual training and professional development requirements with Child Safety (responding and reporting).

6.0 COMMUNICATION

This Procedure is available on the School website and provided to parents upon request.

This Procedure is available to staff through Staff portal and annually upskilled in these procedures and expectations.

7.0 FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESPOURCES

The following policies and guidance and relevant Department of Education (DE) resources apply to this procedure:

- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Restraint and Seclusion Policy and Procedure
- PROTECT policy and guidance
- DE Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations
- DE Child Safe Standards
- DE Identify and respond to student sexual offending

8.0 PROCEDURE INFORMATION

Procedure Owner	St Brendan's Catholic Primary School, Lakes Entrance
Approving Authority	Principal
Risk Rating	High
Implementation	March 2026
Review Date	2027

APPENDIX 1 – ST BRENDAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHILD SAFETY CONTACTS

Anyone can contact these staff to discuss a child safety concern. This includes parents/carers, staff, volunteers, students or anyone else who has concerns about abuse (including grooming).

Role	Name	Phone
Principal	Mr Matthew Hamer	(03) 5155 2712
Assistant Principal	Mrs Leonie Morrison	(03) 5155 2712
Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited	Email: PROTECT@doscel.catholic.edu.au For more information see: DOSCEL Intranet - Child Protection Report abuse if you're a current student	(03) 5622 6600 (DOSCEL office)

APPENDIX 2 - LEGAL OBLIGATIONS RELATING TO REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

There are various legal obligations to report child abuse to relevant authorities, which are listed below.

This procedure ensures compliance with our legal obligations and child safety frameworks and our school's duty of care obligations. These include:

- **Mandatory reporting** to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, which applies where a mandatory reporter forms a reasonable belief a child has suffered, or is likely, to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse and their parents/carers have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, them from that harm.
- **Referring family violence or** child wellbeing concerns to The Orange Door, which can provide support and information for children, young people and families, including support relating to family violence, parenting and wellbeing.
- **Reportable conduct**, which requires certain allegations against adults working in organisations that work with children (including schools) to be reported to the Social Services Regulator and investigated under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- **Failure to disclose offence**, which requires all adults to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 in Victoria.
- **Failure to protect offence,** which requires school staff in a position of authority who become aware that an adult associated with their school poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, to take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

Further information about these legal obligations is available from:

- Department of Education Policy and Advisory Library:
  - Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations Policy
  - Reportable and Notifiable Conduct Policy
- PROTECT Legal Obligations and Child Safety Frameworks.