South West Community College

Child Protection and Child Safe Policy

1. Purpose

Bunbury Regional Community College Inc. trading as South West Community College ("SWCC" or the "College") is committed to the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our students by providing a child-safe environment.

SWCC adheres to the mandatory reporting and other key legislation and is committed to ensuring all incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse are reported immediately to the appropriate authorities and the child's wellbeing is at the centre of any actions or decisions that may occur.

2. Related Documents

Critical and Emergency Incident Policy

Complaints Policy

Staff Code of Conduct

3. Definitions

Child abuse and Neglect: Refers to behaviours and treatment that result in the actual and/or likelihood of harm to the child or young person.

Grooming: The use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques with a vulnerable subject in order to establish trust or normalise sexual harmful behaviour with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation and/or avoiding exposure.

Harm: In relation to a child, includes harm to the child's physical, and emotional or psychological development. (CCS Act 2004)

4. Policy

Understanding Abuse and Neglect

There are four main types of child abuse:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional - including psychological abuse and exposure to family and domestic violence
- Neglect.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when a child is deliberately hurt or is at serious risk of being hurt by someone they know such as a family member, relative, carer, another adult or child. The signs of physical abuse may be subtle and may be easier to spot if a child has no way of concealing the injury.

Examples of physical abuse may include beating, strangling, biting, shaking, throwing, scalding, burning and/or suffocating the child; poisoning, being given or forced to ingest alcohol or drugs or assault using implements.

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.

Child sexual abuse is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline.

Children who are sexually abused have often been groomed into trusting their abuser and many do not understand they are being abused. .

Emotional Abuse
Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, threatened or humiliated. Emotional abuse also includes exposure to family and domestic violence, which causes serious emotional, physical and psychological harm to children, as well as placing them an increased likelihood of other kinds of abuse and neglect.

The term emotional abuse also includes psychological abuse which involves behaviours such as isolating, discrediting, and disregarding.

Neglect
Neglect is when a child does not receive adequate food or shelter, medical treatment, supervision, care, or nurturance, to the extent that their development is harmed, or they are injured.

This may include leaving a child alone without appropriate supervision, not giving a child appropriate attention and emotional support, not seeking medical help for the child when required and not ensuring the child attends school or enrolling them in school.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

There are two types of reporting of child abuse and neglect:
1. Reporting child abuse/concerns (physical and emotional abuse and neglect)
2. Mandatory Reporting for Child Sexual Abuse

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Concerns
There are various ways you may form a belief or have a concern for a child:
- You may have observed indicators regarding abuse and neglect. This may include a change in behaviour.
- Observations of the behaviour of an adult interacting with the child.
- Disclosure of abuse neglect from the child/ren concerned.
- Information from another source such as a family member, sibling, friend etc.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or life-threatening situation, contact the Western Australia Police Force immediately by dialling 000.

If you are concerned about a child's wellbeing (and it doesn't require immediate Police attention), please contact the **Department of Communities Central Intake Team on 1800 273 889.**

Crisis Care: Provides Western Australia's after-hours response to reported concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing and information and referrals for people experiencing crisis. **Crisis Care free call: 1800 199 008**

Professional referrals: If you are a professional and want to report a concern about a child, please complete and submit the professional referral online form.

If, following a report, a family approaches the College to receive support for their child or the College in their duty of care of the child wishes to meet with the parents/carers, it is recommended that any meeting be conducted with a minimum of two staff members present (e.g. The principal and one other) to provide support.

SWCC may consider support from the other professionals or outside agencies. However, It is important to remember that the focus of any meeting will be on the welfare of the child.

Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting laws require designated groups of people to report child abuse to government authorities and draws on the capacity of professionals who typically deal with children in the course of their work to report serious concerns of child abuse to help agencies with the primary aim to protect children from significant harm.

In Western Australia (WA), the Children and Community Services Act 2004 is the legislation that governs the majority of mandatory reporting in WA. Since 1 January 2009, doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers, and police officers have been mandated to report child sexual abuse. Boarding supervisors were included as mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse on 1 January 2016 with further mandatory reporter groups being added between 1 November 2022 and 1 May 2025.

Section 124B of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 requires a specified person in WA to make a mandatory report if the person:

believes on reasonable grounds that a child –

- has been the subject of sexual abuse that occurred on or after the commencement day; or
- is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse;

and

forms the belief –

- in the course of the person's work (whether paid or unpaid) as a specified person; and
- on or after commencement day, must report the belief as soon as practicable after forming the belief.

Under the Children and Community Services Act 2004, a mandatory report must be made as soon as practicable after the reporter forms their belief. The earlier the report is received, the earlier steps can be taken to protect a child, where this is necessary.

A mandatory report can be made in writing or orally. If an oral report is made, it must be followed by a written report as soon as practicable after making the oral report (ideally within 24 hours).

The following information is from the Mandatory Reporting Guide: Western Australia. Please call the Mandatory Reporting Service on 1800 708 704 if you are unsure.

Before making a report, mandatory reporters should consult the Mandatory Reporting Guide: Western Australia to assess whether they believe that a child has been or is being sexually abused.

Response to Disclosures

If a child indicates a possible disclosure in a public setting or in front of a peer you may need to interrupt them to protect their privacy. Protective interrupting is a strategy to prevent a child disclosing in front of other children or people who should not be privy to their information.

According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2015) and Briggs (2012), the following is important when a child is disclosing:

- Give the child your full attention.
- Maintain a calm appearance.
- Believe the child.
- Don't be afraid of saying the 'wrong' thing.

Staff must be aware that a disclosure can arouse within themselves strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness or evoke past personal experiences. It is important to ask for help and assistance and also try and control these feelings and work through them after the disclosure. Even a hint of disbelief could cause a child to stop disclosing.

Grooming Behaviour

Grooming refers to 'actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child' (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, p. 9).

By virtue of their role, College staff have access to children, and sometimes in other locations. Therefore, it is important that staff maintain professional boundaries and refrain from conduct which may be identified as grooming. It is also important that staff are able to identify unacceptable conduct in others, identify warning signs and report it to appropriate authorities if they observe it.

For specific behaviours that may indicate a staff member may be grooming a student, please refer to Teacher-Student Professional Boundaries - TRBWA

Online Grooming – ESafety

Online grooming is when an older person tricks someone under 18 into thinking they're in a close relationship so they can sexually abuse them, which includes child sexual abuse online. This is illegal and should be reported to the police and the online platform or service where contact was made.

The e-safety Commissioner is an excellent resource for schools in providing online safety resources, factsheets and training for teachers, schools and communities. There is also resources and information on cyberbullying, inappropriate content and responding to online incidents. Reporting abuse or online harm.

Requirements

Training

In line with the Guide to the registration standards and other requirements for Non-Government Schools (The Guide) Standard 10: Preventing and responding to child abuse,10.5 states: *All staff, governing body members and regular volunteers participate in learning opportunities at least annually about the law with respect to mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse and the school's policies, procedures and practices that aim to ensure students' safety and wellbeing at school and during school-related activities, including the creation and maintenance of child-safe physical and online environments.*

In line with the Guide to the registration standards and other requirements for Non-Government Schools (The Guide) Standard 7, it is recognised that governing bodies and school leadership have the responsibility for managing all critical and emergency incidents in the best interests of students.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

From January 2023, a reportable conduct scheme was established in WA. It requires that certain matters be reported to the Ombudsman WA and investigated by SWCC.

Conduct covered by the scheme is:

- sexual offences;
- sexual misconduct;
- physical assault; and
- other prescribed offences.
- significant neglect of a child; and
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

The heads of organisation i.e. Principal, Director, COO covered by the Scheme will be required to:

- notify the Ombudsman of allegations of, or convictions for, child abuse by their employees;
- investigate the allegation; and
- provide a report to the Ombudsman on the outcome of the investigation.

It is anticipated that most, if not all, matters which SWCC would need to report to the Ombudsman would also constitute a reportable incident for the purposes of this standard.

Further information about the reportable conduct scheme is available from the Ombudsman WA

Section 42 – Notification to the TRBWA

Section 42 of the Teacher Registration Act 2012 (Act) requires employers of registered teachers to notify the TRBWA, where the employer has reasonable grounds to suspect that a teacher has engaged in serious misconduct or may have taught with serious incompetence, that results in a teacher:

- being dismissed or suspended from teaching at the educational institution; or
- resigning or ceasing to teach at the educational institution.

Notifications must be given within 7 days after the day on which the later of the two circumstances occurs. Failure to comply may incur a penalty of $5000.

Note that, regulation 26(5) of the Teacher Registration (General) Regulations 2012 protects employers from any civil liability as a result of providing this information to the Board.
Section 42 notice from employer form

For further information, please contact the Assistant Director, Investigations and Compliance on (08) 9223 9101 or icb@trb.education.wa.edu.au.

Student Code of Conduct
The Guide to the Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-Government Schools 2024 (the 'Guide') describes in Standard 10.7 the requirements of a student code of conduct. 10.7 The school, in consultation with its students, develops and regularly reviews a student code of conduct and guidelines.

Protective Behaviours and sexual abuse prevention education
Standard 10.6 of the Guide to the registration standards and other requirements for Non-Government Schools (The Guide) states: All students receive a protective behaviours and sexual abuse prevention education which:

(a) is developed by experts in child abuse prevention;
(b) is age and developmental-stage appropriate;
(c) is culturally-appropriate;
(d) is integrated into the curriculum of the school and makes relevant subject-matter links;
(e) includes e-safety education; and
(f) builds practical self-protective skills and strategies.

Storage and retention of child protection related documents
Standard 10.9 of the Guide to the registration standards and other requirements for Non-Government Schools (The Guide) states:

(a) contain as much detail as possible;
(b) are stored securely; and
(c) are not destroyed without the approval of the Director General or, where their retention becomes impracticable or unduly onerous, are forwarded to the Director General with her permission for retention in accordance with the State Records Act 2000.

It is important that all staff understand where all notes and documentation regarding child protection are to be stored, who has access to them, their confidentiality and security.

Recruitment & Selection of Staff

SWCC has in place practices ensure all new employees, volunteers and contractors are adequately screened, inducted trained and supervised. This will mainly include a current WWC and a National Police Clearance upon joining the College.

Teachers
Are required, through the Teachers Registration Board (TRB), to have a police clearance. The Working with Children (WWC) legislation requires them to have a WWC Check. This includes relief teachers.

Non-teaching staff.
Are also required to have a WWC check if their usual duties involve contact with children (see details below).

Volunteers who are not parents.
Who have contact with children are also required to have a WWC Check.

Volunteers who are parents
Are exempt from acquiring a WWC Check, unless on an overnight camp. Similarly, parent volunteers who undertake a professional role (either paid or unpaid) at the school are also to be in possession of a current WWC Card (WWCC).

Contractors
Education related services, music tutors, counselling (mental health, speech therapy) transport service specifically for children (school bus) are examples where WWCC would be required. See Categories of child related work.

Governing Body Members
Are required to provide evidence that they are eligible to serve on the governing body/council. Evidence will include a WWCC and might include provision of a recent National Police Check.

See the Working with Children website for more information on exemptions.

5. Responsibilities

Governing Council

- Owner of the policy and ensuring compliance.
- Ensuring the *Principles for Child Safe Organisations* are adhered to, and the rights of young people are upheld.
- Undertaking professional training covering Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse, Child Protection and Grooming at least annually.
- Ensures relevant reporting is being completed through the Principal, Director and COO. This includes Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Scheme obligations to the appropriate authorities and specific Governing Council reporting through Incident and Risk reporting and discussion.

Principal

- The *Principles for Child Safe Organisations* are adhered to, and the rights of young people are upheld.
- The College provides a Protective Behaviours curriculum that covers a comprehensive and age-appropriate personal safety component enabling students to recognise and report abuse, understand power in relationships, and develop protective strategies, including seeking help. (Standard 10.6).
- Policies relating to child safety and wellbeing, such as this, are child focused and operational.
- Staff understand and comply with all policies and procedures.
- Appropriately qualified staff are recruited including rigorous recruitment processes, including all applicants being screened and holding a valid Working with Children Check and National Police Clearance (or proof of application) which are verified prior to commencement.
- Staff complete relevant risk assessments for planned student activities.

Staff

- To identify, manage and respond to any suspicions or disclosures of abuse, depending on their role and obligations as outlined herein. E.g. Teachers completing a Mandatory Report.

- All staff and regular volunteers undertake professional training annually including, but not limited to, the Code of Conduct and Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse, Child Protection and Grooming.

6. Policy Review Date

31 October 2027.

This policy is owned by the Governing Council and is implemented by the Principal and will be reviewed with a change in legislation or by no later than 3 years after Approval by the Governing Council.

Date	New, Material, Minor, Review	Approval
December 2016	New	Governing Council
July 2021	Reviewed	Governing Council
August 2024	Material	Governing Council

7. Contact SWCC

Web http://www.swcc.wa.edu.au
Email principal@swcc.wa.edu.au
Phone 6724 6971
Bunbury Campus: 56 Wittenoom Street, Bunbury WA 6230
Busselton Campus: 50 Albert Terrace, Busselton WA 6280