

CHILD SAFETY COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the processes by which **Alphington Grammar School** manages complaints, concerns and reports relating to:

- Child safety and wellbeing
- Allegations of child abuse or child-related misconduct
- Breaches of the Child Safe Standards
- Concerns regarding staff, volunteers, contractors or other members of the school community

The policy ensures that complaints are:

- Taken seriously
- Responded to promptly and fairly
- Managed in a culturally safe, child-focused and trauma-informed manner
- Handled in compliance with **Ministerial Order No. 1359** and relevant Victorian legislation

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Members of the School Council / Governing Authority
- The Principal and leadership team
- All staff (teaching and non-teaching)
- Volunteers and contractors
- Students
- Parents, carers and members of the school community

This policy applies to complaints received in relation to school activities, including online environments and school boarding premises (if applicable).

3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy supports compliance with:

- Ministerial Order No. 1359
- Victorian Child Safe Standards
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)

4. Policy Statement

Alphington Grammar School:

- Has **zero tolerance for child abuse**
- Promotes a culture where children feel safe to speak up
- Ensures complaints processes are accessible, transparent and child-focused
- Supports complainants and protects them from victimisation or reprisal
- Manages complaints confidentially and fairly
- Takes immediate action where a child is at risk

5. Alignment to Ministerial Order 1359

This policy addresses:

- **Clause 9** – Child safety complaints processes
- **Clause 7** – Reporting and responding to suspected child abuse
- **Clause 10** – Risk management
- **Clause 8** – Child empowerment
- **Clause 11** – Implementation and review

6. Guiding Principles

6.1 Child-Centred Approach

- The safety and wellbeing of the child is paramount
- The child's voice is heard and respected
- Children are informed about complaint processes in age-appropriate ways

6.2 Cultural Safety

- Complaints processes are culturally safe for Aboriginal children
- Inclusive of children from diverse backgrounds
- Respectful of disability and additional needs

6.3 Procedural Fairness

- All parties are treated respectfully
- Allegations are assessed objectively
- Decisions are evidence-based

7. What Is a Complaint?

A complaint may relate to:

- Child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect)
- Grooming behaviours
- Inappropriate conduct
- Breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Failure to act on child safety concerns
- Unsafe school environments

Complaints may be made verbally or in writing.

8. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made to:

- The Principal
- The Child Safety Officer
- A member of the Leadership Team
- Any trusted staff member
- The School Council (where appropriate)

Children may:

- Speak to a trusted adult
- Use a written form
- Use an anonymous reporting option

Information about how to complain is:

- Published on the School website

- Included in student handbooks
- Communicated in induction materials
- Displayed in student-friendly formats

9. Immediate Safety Response

If a complaint indicates that a child is in immediate danger:

- Emergency services (000) will be contacted
- The child will be protected from further harm
- Mandatory reporting obligations will be met immediately

10. Reporting Obligations

Where a complaint relates to suspected child abuse:

The School will:

- Comply with mandatory reporting requirements
- Notify Child Protection or Victoria Police where required
- Comply with Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect obligations
- Notify the Commission for Children and Young People under the Reportable Conduct Scheme (where applicable)

Internal investigations will not delay external reporting.

11. Complaint Handling Process

Step 1 – Acknowledgement

- Complaint acknowledged within 2 working days
- Complainant informed of next steps

Step 2 – Risk Assessment

- Immediate safety risk assessment conducted
- Interim protective measures implemented if required

Step 3 – Investigation

- Conducted by Principal or delegated senior staff
- May involve external investigators where appropriate
- Child interviewed in trauma-informed manner
- Procedural fairness afforded

Step 4 – Outcome

- Findings documented
- Corrective actions implemented
- Disciplinary action where required

Step 5 – Communication

- Complainant informed of outcome (within privacy constraints)
- Ongoing support offered

12. Support for Children and Complainants

The School will:

- Provide wellbeing support
- Offer counselling
- Allow a support person during interviews
- Protect from retaliation or victimisation

13. Confidentiality and Records Management

- Complaints are handled confidentially
- Information shared only on a need-to-know basis
- Records stored securely
- Records retained in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria standards
- Child safety complaint data analysed for trends

14. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be:

- Assessed on available information
- Investigated where sufficient information exists

15. Protection from Victimisation

The School prohibits:

- Retaliation
- Intimidation
- Discrimination against complainants

Disciplinary action will be taken if victimisation occurs.

16. Continuous Improvement

The School will:

- Review complaint data annually
- Report de-identified trends to School Council
- Incorporate findings into risk management processes
- Review this policy at least every two years

17. Responsibilities

Governing Authority

- Ensure compliant complaints processes
- Monitor child safety complaint data
- Oversee Reportable Conduct Scheme compliance

Principal

- Ensure complaints are managed appropriately
- Ensure reporting obligations are met
- Provide resources for training

Child Safety Officer

- Support complaint handling
- Provide guidance on child-safe practice
- Maintain complaint register

Staff and Volunteers

- Report concerns immediately
- Cooperate with investigations

18. Communication and Accessibility

This policy is:

- Publicly available
- Written in accessible language
- Provided in child-friendly summaries
- Available in translated formats upon request

19. Review Schedule

This policy will be reviewed:

- Every two years
- Following any serious incident
- Following legislative changes
- Following VRQA audit recommendations

APPENDIX A – CHILD SAFETY COMPLAINT FLOWCHART (Summary)

1. Concern Raised
2. Immediate Safety Check
3. Mandatory Reporting (if required)
4. Risk Assessment
5. Investigation
6. Outcome & Action
7. Record Keeping
8. Review & Monitoring

APPENDIX B

CHILD SAFETY COMPLAINT / CONCERN REPORT FORM

Section 1 – Complainant Details

| Field | Details |
|--|---|
| Name (optional if anonymous) | |
| Relationship to School | <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Carer <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| Contact details | |
| Preferred method of contact | |
| Date of report | |
| Time of report | |
| If the complainant is a student , was a support person offered? | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Section 2 – Child Details (if applicable)

| Field | Details |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Child's Name | |
| Year Level | |
| Date of Birth (if known) | |
| Parent/Carer Name | |

Is the child of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background?

Yes No Prefer not to say

Does the child have additional needs?

Disability Medical Condition Cultural Needs Other

Section 3 – Details of the Concern / Complaint

1. Nature of concern (tick all that apply):

- Suspected child abuse
- Grooming behaviour
- Inappropriate conduct
- Breach of Code of Conduct
- Failure to report
- Online safety concern
- Other

2. Description of incident/concern:

(Include dates, times, location, people involved. Attach additional pages if required.)

3. Is the child currently safe?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If “No” or “Unsure”, describe immediate risk:

Section 4 – Alleged Person Responsible (if known)

| Field | Details |
|-------|---------|
|-------|---------|

Name

Position / Role

Relationship to child

Section 5 – Actions Taken So Far

Has this been reported elsewhere?

- Victoria Police
- Child Protection
- CCYP (Reportable Conduct)
- Principal
- Other

Details:

Section 6 – Mandatory Reporting Assessment (Staff Use Only)

- Mandatory report required
- Report made to Child Protection

Date:

Time:

Reference number:

Police notified

Event number:

Reportable Conduct Scheme notification required

Section 7 – Risk Assessment (Staff Use Only)

Immediate protective actions implemented:

Staff member stood down

Supervision arrangements adjusted

Student safety plan developed

Parent notified

Other

Section 8 – Investigation Outcome (Leadership Use Only)

Findings:

Outcome:

Corrective/disciplinary action taken:

Date closed:

Principal signature:

Privacy Statement

This information will be handled confidentially in accordance with privacy legislation and child safety obligations. Information may be shared with relevant authorities where required by law.