

# CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

<b>Proprietor</b>	Global Village Learning Ltd (ABN 52 090 773 470)
<b>School</b>	Global Village Learning, New Gisborne Campus
<b>Policy owner</b>	Board of Directors
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Principal, with Campus Lead for day-to-day implementation
<b>Date adopted</b>	June 2022 (reviewed March 2026)
<b>Review cycle</b>	Every two years
<b>Next review</b>	March 2028
<b>Regulatory context</b>	Ministerial Order No. 1359 (clauses 6, 11, 12); Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) – mandatory reporting; Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) – Reportable Conduct Scheme; Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) – failure to disclose (s 327) and failure to protect (s 490); Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the procedures Global Village Learning (GVL) has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, and to ensure that all staff and members of the GVL community understand and follow the legal obligations that apply to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

## 2. Scope

This Policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a young person, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to GVL (in physical or online environments).

## 3. Definitions

### 3.1 Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- physical violence inflicted on a child
- sexual offences committed against a child
- grooming of a child by an adult
- family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include young-person-to-young-person incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

### 3.2 Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity at a later

time. Grooming can include communicating (including electronic communications) and attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

### **3.3 School staff member**

For the purposes of this Policy, a school staff member includes a contractor engaged by GVL or the governing authority to perform child-related work.

## **4. Policy**

GVL understands the important role it plays in protecting young people from abuse. We have a range of policies and measures in place to prevent child abuse from occurring at GVL or during GVL activities.

### **4.1 Information for young people**

All young people should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns they have.

If a young person does not know who to approach at GVL, they should start with their Guide or the Wellbeing Coordinator.

Young people can also raise concerns through child-friendly channels including their Learning Huddles, conversations with their Guide, or directly with the Wellbeing Coordinator acting as Child Safety Champion.

### **4.2 Identifying child abuse**

To ensure we can respond in the best interests of young people when complaints or concerns relating to child abuse are raised, all staff and relevant volunteers must:

- understand how to identify signs of child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators
- understand their legal obligations in relation to reporting child abuse to relevant authorities, as set out in Appendix A of this Policy
- follow the procedures below for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure GVL acts in the best interests of young people and complies with its legal obligations.

At GVL we recognise the diversity of the young people and families at our school, and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering and responding to child safety incidents or concerns.

## **5. Procedures for responding to an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse**

In responding to a child safety incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, GVL will follow:

- the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Child Abuse, for complaints and concerns relating to all forms of child abuse
- the Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending, for complaints and concerns relating to young person sexual offending
- the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy for complaints and concerns relating to young person physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

## **6. School staff and volunteer responsibilities**

### **6.1 Immediate action**

If a school staff member or volunteer witnesses an incident of child abuse, or reasonably believes, suspects or receives a disclosure or allegation that a young person has been, or is at risk of being, abused, they must:

- if a young person is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid (appropriate to their level of training) and call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- notify the Wellbeing Coordinator (acting as Child Safety Champion), the Campus Lead, or a member of the leadership team as soon as possible, who will ensure GVL follows the steps in these procedures.

If a staff member or volunteer is uncertain whether an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion gives rise to a concern about child abuse, they must always err on the side of caution and report the concern to the Wellbeing Coordinator or the Campus Lead.

If the Campus Lead is unavailable, the Executive Director will take on this role. If the allegation relates to the Executive Director or the Campus Lead, the staff member must contact the Chair of the GVL Board.

Refer to Appendix B for guidance on how to respond to a disclosure of child abuse.

## **6.2 Reporting to authorities and referring to services**

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, the Wellbeing Coordinator or Campus Lead must ensure all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse are reported as soon as possible.

The following steps ensure GVL complies with the Four Critical Actions as well as additional actions required under the Child Safe Standards. The Wellbeing Coordinator or Campus Lead must ensure:

- all relevant information is reported to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection (131 278), Victoria Police (000 for emergencies, 131 444 for non-emergencies) or relevant services where required
- the incident is recorded internally in GVL's incident register, consistent with the Data Management Policy
- all reportable conduct allegations or incidents are reported by the Principal to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) under the Reportable Conduct Scheme administered under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic). Where a reportable conduct allegation is made against the Principal, the Chair of the GVL Board must be informed and will make a report to CCYP.

In circumstances where staff members are legally required to report child abuse to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police and they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another person at GVL, or the designated member of GVL staff does not agree that a report needs to be made, the staff member who has formed the reasonable belief must still contact DFFH Child Protection and Victoria Police to make the report.

If you believe that a young person is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing, you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST or The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family is open to receiving support), DFFH Child Protection, or Victoria Police.

## **6.3 Contacting parents or carers**

The Wellbeing Coordinator or Campus Lead must ensure parents and carers are notified unless advised otherwise by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns in relation to informing parents or carers.

The Principal may seek independent legal advice on notifying parents and carers, and where relevant, the wider school community, in complex matters.

## **6.4 Ongoing protection and support**

The Wellbeing Coordinator, Campus Lead and wellbeing team must ensure appropriate steps are taken by GVL to protect the young person and other young people from any continued risk of abuse. These steps must be taken in consultation with any relevant external agency, such as DFFH Child Protection, Victoria Police or the Commission for Children and Young People. Ongoing protection will include further reports to authorities if new information comes to light or further incidents occur.

Appropriate, culturally sensitive and ongoing support must be offered and provided to all affected young people. Ongoing support will be based on any available advice from parents and carers, health practitioners and relevant authorities, and may include referral to wellbeing professionals, development of a safety plan, young person support group meetings, and, for incidents between young people, behaviour management and support measures.

## **6.5 Recordkeeping**

The Wellbeing Coordinator or Campus Lead will ensure that:

- detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion are taken, ideally using the PROTECT Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template, including, where possible, input from the staff member or volunteer who reported the incident, disclosure or suspicion
- detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by GVL to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion
- all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including GVL's immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely in a restricted-access location in accordance with the Data Management Policy
- records connected to a reportable conduct matter or an allegation of child abuse are retained for at least 45 years.

## **7. For school visitors and community members**

All community members aged 18 years or over have legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse. Refer to Appendix A for detailed information.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

Members of the community do not have to inform GVL if they are making a disclosure to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a young person at GVL, the community member should report this concern to the Principal so that appropriate steps to support the young person can be taken.

## **8. Additional requirements for all staff**

All staff play an important role in supporting young person safety and wellbeing and have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to young people.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in the above procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a young person is at risk of child abuse. This means that if, after following the actions outlined in the procedure, a staff member reasonably believes that a young person remains at risk of abuse, they must:

- raise these concerns with the Principal in the first instance, and escalate to the Chair of the GVL Board if they remain unsatisfied
- report the matter to the relevant authorities where they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another staff member.

Staff must refer to Appendix A for further information on their obligations relating to reporting to authorities.

## 9. Communication

This Policy is communicated to the GVL community in the following ways:

- available publicly on the GVL website
- included in staff induction processes and annual staff training
- included in volunteer induction processes and training for relevant volunteers
- discussed at annual staff briefings and meetings
- included in the staff handbook
- hard copy available from school administration upon request.

## 10. Related policies

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints and Grievance Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Supervision and Duty of Care Policy
- Gender and Diversity Policy
- Data Management Policy.

## Appendix A: Legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse

The following information outlines the legal obligations relating to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities. The procedures outlined in this Policy ensure compliance with the below reporting obligations, and also include additional steps to ensure compliance with GVL's duty of care obligations.

### A.1 Mandatory reporting to DFFH Child Protection

The following individuals are mandatory reporters under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic):

- registered teachers and early childhood teachers (including Principals and school staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT)
- school counsellors and staff who provide direct support to young people for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing
- nurses
- registered psychologists
- police officers
- registered medical practitioners
- out-of-home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
- early childhood workers
- youth justice workers
- people in religious ministry
- midwives.

All mandatory reporters must make a report to DFFH Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse or sexual abuse, and the child's parents or carers have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all mandated staff at GVL to be aware that they

are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection, and they must make a mandatory report even if the Principal or any other mandatory reporter does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

The identity of a person who reports protective concerns to DFFH Child Protection is protected by law. It is an offence for a person, other than the person who made the report, to disclose the name of the person who made a report or any information that is likely to lead to their identification.

All mandated GVL staff must undertake the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning module annually.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, even if they are not a mandatory reporter listed above.

## **A.2 Reporting wellbeing concerns to Child FIRST or The Orange Door**

GVL encourages staff to make a referral to Child FIRST or The Orange Door when they have a significant concern for a young person's wellbeing and the family is open to receiving support.

## **A.3 Reportable Conduct Scheme**

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is focused on worker and volunteer conduct and how organisations investigate and respond to suspected child abuse. The scheme aims to improve organisational responses to suspected child abuse and to facilitate the identification of individuals who pose a risk of harm to children. GVL is subject to the scheme under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).

There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic):

- sexual offences against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct (including grooming) against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

A reportable conduct allegation is made where a person makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief, that a worker or volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct.

If school staff or volunteers become aware of reportable conduct by any current or former employee, contractor or volunteer, they must notify the Principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the Principal, they must notify the Chair of the GVL Board.

The Principal (or the Chair of the GVL Board where the allegation relates to the Principal) must notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former employees, contractors or volunteers, including parent volunteers. Reports are made through the Reportable Conduct online portal available on the CCYP website, or by contacting the Commission directly.

## **A.4 Failure to disclose offence**

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation under section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) 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 disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000, the local police station, or the Police Assistance Line on 131 444) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

'Reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development lead a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse lead to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

'Reasonable excuse' is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person, including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed to Victoria Police and you have no further information to add (for example, through a mandatory report to DFFH Child Protection or a report to Victoria Police from another member of school staff).

## **A.5 Failure to protect offence**

This reporting obligation under section 490 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) applies to GVL staff in a position of authority. This includes the Principal, Executive Director and Campus Lead. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with GVL (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult from working with young people pending an investigation and reporting concerns to Victoria Police.

If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

## **Appendix B: Managing disclosures of child abuse**

### **B.1 When managing a disclosure relating to child abuse you should:**

- listen to the young person and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency. Where possible use the young person's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten them or interrupt)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- acknowledge to the young person that it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions (for example, gently ask 'What happened next?' rather than 'Why?')
- be patient and allow the young person to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the young person into telling you more than they want to. They will be asked many questions by other professionals, and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the young person that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as 'I see', restate the young person's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep them talking in an open-ended way
- tell the young person in age-appropriate language that you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these

authorities if appropriate (for a younger child this may be as simple as saying 'I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you')

- take prompt action in relation to following the procedures outlined above.

## **B.2 When managing a disclosure you should AVOID:**

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the young person feel uncomfortable and may cause them to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the young person to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making any promises that you will keep the information the young person provided confidential
- making promises to the young person about what will occur next or that things will be different. The process can be unpredictable and different for each young person depending on their circumstances. Instead, reassure them that you and others will do your best to help.

## **Endorsement**

<b>Endorsement by Board</b>	March 2026
<b>Review date</b>	March 2026
<b>Next review date</b>	March 2028